



**THEMATIC UNITY OF GANDHIAN THOUGHT:
A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY**

ABSTRACT

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Philosophy
IN
PHILOSOPHY

BY

Swaleheen Khanam

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

DR. PREETI SAYEED

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY
ALIGARH (INDIA)

2015

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, Gandhi's central ideas and their practical utility have been recounted, underlying which the thematic unity of his thought is clearly visible. Most of the studies on Gandhian philosophy have situated 'truth' as central, but in my conclusion, I would determine soul-force to be the propelling thrust for the entire philosophy of Gandhi. He did not separate between the mundane and transcendental, worldly and other worldly and all his doctrines and principles are inter-woven, taking from and providing strength to each other as opposed to being tied down to their definitions that project them in isolation. The spark that ignites and lightens up Gandhi's entire scheme of thoughts, the glue that cohesively binds together all his ideas and experiments distinguishes itself as one central force- the soul-force.

Architect of Indian independence and one of the greatest men of twentieth century, Mohandas Karamchanda Gandhi was a multifaceted personality. He was a politician, a philosopher, a reformer, a spiritual leader and above all a humble human being, always to be remembered for his selfless work and incessant struggle for the cause of humanity. He was a man of his own destiny, creating history for India and for the rest of the world to follow. He was an eminent thinker with an inimitable approach to the conceptions and notions that marked the past. Gandhi was not an academician who would be required to make a systematic presentation of his ideas. In order to present his philosophy in an organised and logically cogent manner, his ideas have to be perused from his various speeches and writings. Gandhi was not a system

builder, but with a deep understanding and insight, he could shape the scheme of his beliefs in an appropriate and relevant manner so as to suit the requirements of the masses. His concepts underwent evolutionary and revolutionary changes constantly to confront any challenge he encountered.

Though he had many admirers and followers of his way of thinking and work, he also bore the brunt of severe criticism and was often misinterpreted. Gandhi inspired innumerable people during his lifetime and continues to be a source of inspiration for the world today. His ideas had a huge expanse for they were well experimented and most importantly held the interests of the common man at its centre. Gandhi wrote his autobiography under the title- *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. This perhaps strikes the keynote of his life for in all that he said and did, he was continually striving to realise truth for himself and spread it to those around him. From one point of view, his was essentially a pragmatic approach specific to given situation. That is why one often finds many a statement in his writings which taken in isolation, may often seem inconsistent with one another. On a closer scrutiny, his pragmatic approach to problems discloses a consistency inspired by Gandhi's commitment to certain basic and unchanging principles. He held on to his ideals passionately. We therefore find a deep underlying unity in all his statements in spite of their superficial inconsistencies. Battling for truth and the non-violent assertion of rights Gandhi was the first person in the history of the world who spread the message of non-violence to change the regime and social order of a nation. The world knows him as the leader of Indian Nationalist Movement who liberated

his country from the colonial power, but in a deeper sense he wanted to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on this earth. His teachings are of great relevance to the present day scenario that is marked by unending turmoil, not only for India but to the entire world. He spent precious years of his life working meticulously to remove colonial rule from India as well as for an overall betterment of humanity.

Gandhi never considered himself to be a great scholar or one born with exceptional faculties or blessed with anything exclusively divine in him. He regarded himself as an average man with average abilities. Born in a middle class family, he was a mediocre student, shy and nervous. His first attempt in his professional life as a lawyer had wretchedly failed. But he was a constant worshipper and humble seeker of truth, a man with exceptional sincerity, honesty and truthfulness. For him, understanding meant action. Whenever an idea appealed to him, he would immediately translate that into practice for the betterment of humanity. He never flinched from taking risks and never hesitated in confessing his mistakes and no amount of criticism, opposition, or ridicule could ever deter him. Through relentless effort and never ending trials Gandhi carved out a life for himself that was dedicated to the search for truth. His life was lived in conformity with certain well coordinated basic principles that were deeply integrated into his existence. His teachings and schemes of reform were a portrayal of that very basic unity of purpose. This unity however, is not always visible to superficial studies that cursorily glean through his writings.

Gandhi believed in the unity of human life, presented as a synthetic whole which cannot be broken loose into divisions that are religious, moral, political, economic, social etc. The seemingly separate segments are just different aspects of individual existence that are not mutually exclusive but inextricably bound together. The elements of unity are there but often remain unnoticed since they resist being forced into the confines of a rigid systematization. Gandhi was given to act within the demands of the situation as and when they arose he grappled with the problems as they presented themselves to him. But in doing so a consonance with his basic moral principles is clearly visible. Far from encouraging self-enclosed and alienable moral principles he shaped his philosophy of life as the living essence of a moral attitude that holds within its folds a holistic concern for all that is of greater relevance to mankind.

He has made specific contributions in the social, political, economic, moral and religious fields but his thought cannot be categorized or labeled in isolation from each other on account of their deep inter-relatedness. On account of that innate connectedness it becomes inevitable that no justice to any one aspect is possible in isolation from the other aspects. The philosophy of Gandhi was so inter-disposed that a demarcation of his doctrines in independent well defined ambits becomes impossible. His seminal principle of non-violence, for instance, could never be confined merely for political expediency but met with spiritual and ethical demands. Economic sustenance too was largely met with an attitude of an overall non-violence and concern for the humanity at large.

In this work, I have brought into consideration the nuanced relatedness of the myriad facets of Gandhi's philosophy mainly through a study of his writings and speeches. Besides primary sources, the conclusions drawn on Gandhi's ideas by scholars of Gandhian literature have also been paid attention to. These sources are interpreted through the lens of contextual social, economic, spiritual and political events. This historical sense gives the thesis a grounding in its own context and enables a strong sense of chronology through which to trace and understand significant changes and developments in Gandhi's philosophy. I am, no doubt, conscious that volumes and volumes have been written and published both in India and abroad on Gandhian thought, however it cannot be denied that on a subject such as this no work can be assumed as conclusive. Located at any point of temporality, steeped with the issues of the day there always remains the possibility to address Gandhian thought as a possible and potent resource. To claim that an overall complete understanding to Gandhian ideals and their implications is possible would be a gross over estimation. At best it can be claimed that an honest and eager endeavour has been made as faithfully and analytically as possible to approach Gandhi's views.

For the purpose of clarity this dissertation has been broken up into seven chapters. In the first chapter of the thesis entitled "*Life of Gandhi*", we have drawn a brief sketch of Gandhi's life. His entire life from the very beginning till his inhuman assassination was committed to eradicating the oppression borne by his people. He devoted himself to their social, moral, religious,

political and economic upliftment in all possible ways. He undertook the problems of the people of India with deepest sincerity and love, helping out with the purest and most humane means available to him. It is indeed a challenge to sum up the life of a man who had practically lived all his thoughts and whose concerns were not confined to just a few aspects of the lives of his people. His main concern towards human life was centered round an overarching human welfare. In this chapter we try to dwell with the chronological sequences of his life that facilitate him in shaping, building, grooming, and translating his thoughts into actions.

In the second chapter entitled *“Influences on Gandhi”*, we have explored the diverse and strong influences that shaped Gandhi into a man of simplicity, austerity and above all a fearless man with an orientation to fight out injustice. A gradual and progressive assimilation of ideas from different powerful sources went into the development of Gandhi’s philosophy. The sources that influenced Gandhi’s thoughts were so diverse and spread out wide, both in space and in time that they involve almost all ages and all corners of the world. In this chapter our main endeavour would be to explore the various strains that hold charge of shaping his thoughts.

In the third chapter entitled *“Political Foundations of Gandhi’s Philosophy”*, we make a study of the political aspect of Gandhi’s philosophy. He was neither a politician or a political philosopher nor committed to any school of thought. His speech and writings were a genuine response to the call of a particular situation that was to be taken under consideration. The

foundation of Gandhian thought i.e. non-violence, satyagraha and swaraj are the guiding principles of the political philosophy of Gandhi, though I would keep reiterating that to study his political philosophy in isolation would take away from its comprehensiveness. In the present chapter, a critical analysis of the above mentioned themes has been dealt with.

The fourth chapter is concerned with the ***“Social Orientation in Gandhi’s Efforts”***. In this chapter we have discussed the social orientation of the philosophy of Gandhi and the alternatives suggested by him in order to put an end to the chaos, confusion and anarchy that ruled social life due to the prevalence of a very long term exploitation and oppression. For this Gandhi initiated a constructive programme that consisted of fourteen modules designed, practiced and disseminated by him. In the present chapter, an assessment of the programme and the notion of sarvodaya has been brought under consideration. Gandhi’s philosophy of sarvodaya includes trusteeship by way of which the wealthy people would be the trustees of trusts that would look after the welfare of the underprivileged.

In the fifth chapter entitled ***“The Fountainhead of Gandhi’s Ethical Philosophy”***, we give an account of moral or ethical philosophy of Gandhi. Gandhi applied his moral force for the welfare of the masses; a force that found its fountainhead in the ideals of soul-force and brahmacharya. Truth that lies at the centre of Gandhian philosophy was considered by him as supreme and perfect. ‘Truth is God’ is the moral law of his philosophy. Soul-force is defined as the force from within i.e. the inner strength of a person, comprising of love,

truth and non-violence and no amount of physical strength was even remotely comparable to that. Brahmacharya is held to be so central to Gandhi's ethical philosophy that the other ethical concepts are either incomplete or are lacking in their credibility without its inclusion.

In the sixth chapter "*The Centrality of the Religious Impulse in Gandhi's Thoughts*", we have studied the religious aspect of Gandhian philosophy. When it comes to Gandhi's relationship to religion we notice that his uniqueness lies in the preservation of the traditional, alongside a welcome acceptance of the radical changes over time that would benefit human kind. Besides his committed involvement with the politics of the country, the father of the nation Gandhi was a *yogi* and an ascetic at heart. For Gandhi religion is a belief, which he practiced to the best of his ability all through his life. It seems quite evident that religion worked as an impulse in Gandhi's activities, not only at a personal plane but also in the political, social and economic domain of existence.

The seventh chapter deals with "*Gandhi's Vision of the Routes to the Economic Empowerment*". In this chapter we make a study of the economic aspects of the philosophy of Gandhi which like everything else in his life, were governed by ethical and moral considerations. It is an attempt to go beyond the stereotypical concerns of economics in analysing social, political and ethical implications of economic actions and policies. His stress on rural economy and emphasis on a simple life, coupled with his concern for the well-being of the poor formed the underlying strength of his unique views on economic

empowerment. Gandhi's economic models were based largely on the requirements of the Indian situation. His thoughts regarding the economy of the country were tied to social concerns. The idea of swadeshi was worked out by Gandhi primarily for economic upliftment of the masses. Gandhi endorsed swadeshi as one of the powerful tool against colonialism. He not only spread it but the meaning, content, and goals of swadeshi have been broadened, deepened, considerably extended in its applications effectively to alleviate poverty and retrieve self esteem . Gandhian philosophy of swadeshi is replete in all its aspects that include the metaphysical, ethical, political, social, cultural, economic and religious.

The *Postscript* of this work is the concluding part that highlights the spirit of integration unique to Gandhian philosophy. The centrality of soul-force as the uniting and cohesive force has been worked out. Gandhi holds that the greatest good of all, towards which mankind is consciously or unconsciously working can be achieved only when the personal and social life of an individual is propelled by the strength of soul-force.

In my conclusion, I would determine soul-force to be the propelling thrust for the entire philosophy of Gandhi. His philosophy springs from his spiritual inclinations which then grow into an integration of the social, the political, the material and the religious; aspects that are integral to human existence with the strength of a love, truth and spirituality collectively known as soul-force. Gandhi experimented with truth and practiced almost all his thoughts in his lifetime thus presenting a comprehensive view of life. The

philosophy of soul-force is the philosophy of the integral man. For Gandhi the only reality is the spirit that is common to all human beings. The only way to its realisation is through the service of the other. Through harmonising the legitimate physical demands of a human being to the higher self a force is born; a force none other than soul-force. Soul-force is thus an expression of a harmonious life co-ordinate under the unilateral direction of truth, where there is no room for evil and only the good that prevails. This force is the plenitude of living for the individual and the masses. Gandhi had proved to the world that each individual is potentially a power house of devotion, perfection and courage but for its realisation one has to discern deep into our own being and search for the inner voice that guides our conscience in the right direction. No matter how much the world order may have shifted, perhaps the only way to avoid the impending doom would be to follow his legacy.

Essentially a spiritual and religious man Gandhi's philosophy expresses itself through an integration of the diverse aspects of human existence with a love, truth and spirituality which is none other than the soul-force he had achieved through deep contemplation and perseverance. It is soul-force that has motivated the extraordinary ambition of integration. He translated all his thoughts into practice in his lifetime thus presenting a comprehensive view of life. Each idea is a further portrayal of all other aspects that both issue from it and support it. This work has been an exploration into the quintessential rudiments of Gandhian thought held together in a symbolic structure.



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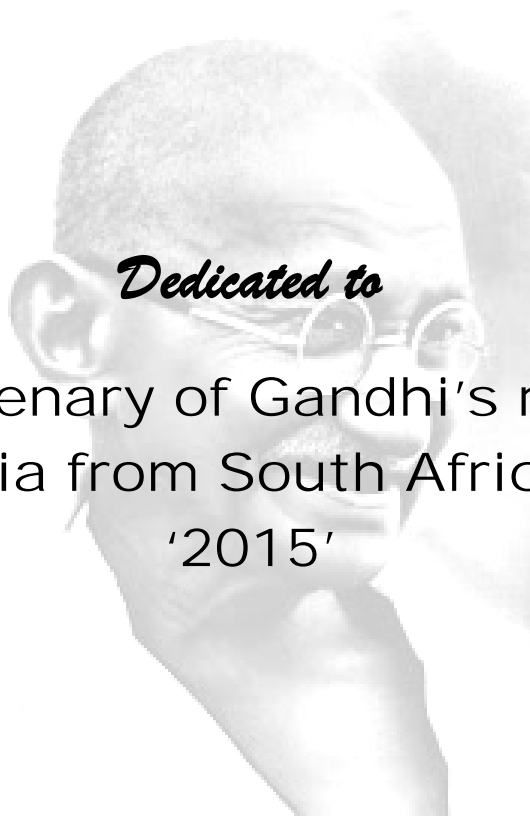
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY
ALIGARH (INDIA)

2015

*In the name of Allah who guides entire humanity towards
knowledge, truth and eternal joys*

Dedicated to

The Centenary of Gandhi's return to
India from South Africa-
'2015'



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DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY



Dated. 10 Jan, 2015

Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis "Thematic Unity of Gandhian Thought: A Philosophical Inquiry" submitted by Ms. Swaleheen Khanam for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the Department of Philosophy, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, is a record of bonafide research work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance. It has not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

Preeti Sayeed

(Dr. Preeti Sayeed)
Supervisor

“A leader of his people, unsupported by only outward authority; a politician whose success rests not upon craft nor mastery of technical devices, but simply on the convincing power of his personality; a victorious fighter who has always scorned the use of force; a man of wisdom and humility, armed with resolve and inflexible consistency, who has devoted all his strength to the uplifting of his people and the betterment of their lot; a man who has confronted the brutality of Europe with the dignity of the simple human being, and thus at all times risen superior.

Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”

Albert Einstein

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(Swaleheeen Khanam)

PREFACE

Great men of ideas, seers, saints, leaders and reformers have distinguished themselves by inhabiting the annals of human history through the emphasis they laid and the attention they focused on some particular aspect culled out of the wide spectrum of human existence. The uniqueness of Gandhi, at variance from the others, rests in the dedication of his entire life in lifting up the lives of not only his countrymen but all humanity from the acute turbulence of oppression unleashed in its harshest manifestations- in preaching and practicing the message of truth, love and non-violence, the unshaking pillars of his philosophical enterprise. Departing from a uni-dimensionality Gandhi devised an approach that melted the diverse aspect of human life; the social, the political, the economic, the religious and spiritual into an undifferentiated whole. Nothing was more central to the other, nothing more peripheral, each spreading into the other, taking from and lending an impetus that would inculcate a determination and firmness required for a life of dignity.

Gandhi never considered himself to be a great scholar or one born with exceptional faculties or blessed with anything exclusively divine in him. He regarded himself as an average man with average abilities. Born in a middle class family, he was a mediocre student, shy and nervous. His first attempt in his professional life as a lawyer had wretchedly failed. But he was a constant worshipper and humble seeker of truth, a man with exceptional sincerity, honesty and truthfulness. For him, understanding meant action. Whenever an idea appealed to him, he would immediately translate that into practice for the

betterment of humanity. He never flinched from taking risks and did not mind confessing his mistakes and no amount of criticism, opposition, or ridicule could ever deter him. Through relentless effort and never ending trials Gandhi carved out a life for himself that was dedicated to the search for truth. His life was lived in conformity with certain well co-ordinated basic principles that were deeply integrated into his existence. His teachings and schemes of reform were a portrayal of that very basic unity of purpose. This unity however, is not always visible to superficial studies that cursorily glean through his writings. The elements of unity are there but often remain unnoticed since they resist being forced into the confines of a rigid systematization. Gandhi was given to act within the demands of the situation as and when they arose and grapple with the problems as they presented themselves to him. But in doing so a consonance with his basic moral principles is clearly visible. As Gandhi was admittedly a humanist, he repeatedly upheld values reminiscent of humanist slogans along the order of 'Nothing human is alien to me'. Far from encouraging self-enclosed and alienable moral principles he shaped his philosophy of life as the living essence of a moral attitude that holds within its folds a holistic concern for all that is of greater relevance to mankind.

Gandhi believed in the unity of human life, presented as a synthetic whole which cannot be broken loose into divisions that are religious, moral, political, economic, social etc. The seemingly separate segments are just different aspects of individual existence that are not mutually exclusive but inextricably bound together. For an existence that is complete and worthy of

itself it needs to be regulated in accordance with a broad plan or an integrated scheme supported by some basic principles and values that provide sustained direction and purpose. However, for a life to be treated as a unity, the rules and principles shaping it need to be necessarily unified and integrated forming a coherent system.

Gandhi's entire life was lived in close conformity with certain basic principles harmoniously welded into all his choices manifesting a unity of purpose. The elements of unity are not always apparent for Gandhi never attempted a systematization of his thoughts. It was for him to take on problems as they presented themselves in keeping with his fundamental moral principles with little or no effort at logical sequencing. The problems that confronted him were an outcome of the turmoil of his slave country and countrymen desperately in need of practical solutions, that Gandhi attempted to provide setting aside any effort at theorizing, thereby creating no new system of philosophy, creed or religion.

He has made specific contributions in the social, political, economic, moral and religious fields but his thought cannot be categorized or labeled in isolation from each other on account of their deep inter relatedness. On account of that innate connectedness it becomes inevitable that no justice to any one aspect is possible in isolation from the other aspects. The philosophy of Gandhi was so inter-disposed that a demarcation of his doctrines in independent well defined ambits becomes impossible. His seminal principle of non-violence, for instance, could never be confined merely for political expediency but met with

spiritual and ethical demands. Economic sustenance too was largely met with an attitude of an overall non-violence and concern for the humanity at large.

In this work, I have brought into consideration the nuanced relatedness of the myriad facets of Gandhi's philosophy mainly through a study of his writings and speeches. Besides primary sources, the conclusions drawn on Gandhi's ideas by scholars of Gandhian literature have also been paid attention to. These sources are interpreted through the lens of contextual social, economic, spiritual and political events. This historical sense gives the thesis a grounding in its own context and enables a strong sense of chronology through which to trace and understand significant changes and developments in Gandhi's philosophy. I am, no doubt, conscious that volumes and volumes have been written and published both in India and abroad on Gandhian thought, however it cannot be denied that on a subject such as this no work can be assumed as conclusive. Located at any point of temporality, steeped with the issues of the day there always remains the possibility to address Gandhian thought as a possible and potent resource. To claim that an overall complete understanding to Gandhian ideals and their implications is possible would be a gross over estimation. At best it can be claimed that an honest and eager endeavour has been made as faithfully and analytically as possible to approach Gandhi's views.

For the purpose of clarity this dissertation has been broken up into seven chapters. The first chapter deals with a brief sketch of Gandhi's life. His entire life from the very beginning till his inhuman assassination was committed to

eradicating the oppression borne by his people. He devoted himself to their social, moral, religious, political and economic upliftment in all possible ways. He undertook all the problems of the people of India with deepest sincerity and love and helping out with the purest and most humane means available to him. It is indeed a challenge difficult to sum up the life of a man who had practically lived all his thoughts and whose concerns were not confined to just a few aspects of the lives of his people. His main concern towards human life was centered round an overarching human welfare. In this chapter we try to dwell with the chronological sequences of his life that facilitate him in shaping, building, grooming, and translating his thoughts into actions.

The second chapter deals with the diverse and strong influences that shaped Gandhi into a man of simplicity, austerity and above all a fearless man with an orientation to fight out injustice. A gradual and progressive assimilation of ideas from different powerful sources went into the development of Gandhi's philosophy. The sources that influenced Gandhi's thoughts were so diverse and spread out wide, both in space and in time that they involve almost all ages and all corners of the world. In this chapter our main endeavour would be to explore the various strains that hold charge of shaping his thoughts.

The third chapter of my thesis deals with the political aspect of Gandhi's philosophy. He was neither a politician or a political philosopher nor committed to any school of thought. His speech and writings were a genuine response to the call of a particular situation that was to be taken under

consideration. The foundation of Gandhian thought i.e. non-violence, satyagraha and swaraj are the guiding principles of the political philosophy of Gandhi, though I would keep reiterating that to study his political philosophy in isolation would take away from its comprehensiveness. In the present chapter, a critical analysis of the above mentioned themes has been dealt with.

The fourth chapter deals with the social orientation of the philosophy of Gandhi in which we have discussed the alternatives suggested by him in order to put an end to the chaos, confusion and anarchy that ruled social life due to the prevalence of a very long term exploitation and oppression. For this Gandhi initiated a constructive programme that consisted of fourteen modules designed, practiced and disseminated by him. In the present chapter, an assessment of the programme and the notion of sarvodaya has been brought under consideration. Gandhi's philosophy of sarvodaya includes trusteeship by way of which the wealthy people would be the trustees of trusts that would look after the welfare of the underprivileged.

The fifth chapter deals with the moral philosophy of Gandhi. Gandhi applied his moral force for the welfare of the masses; a force that found its fountainhead in the ideals of soul-force and brahmacharya. Truth that lies at the centre of Gandhian philosophy was considered by him as supreme and perfect. 'Truth is God' is the moral law of his philosophy. Soul-force is defined as the force from within i.e. the inner strength of a person, comprising of love, truth and non-violence and no amount of physical strength was even remotely comparable to that. Brahmacharya is held to be so central to Gandhi's ethical

philosophy that the other ethical concepts are either incomplete or are lacking in their credibility without its inclusion.

The sixth chapter comprises of the religious aspect of Gandhian philosophy. When it comes to Gandhi's relationship to religion we notice that his uniqueness lies in the preservation of the traditional, alongside a welcome acceptance of the radical changes over time that would benefit human kind. Besides his committed involvement with the politics of the country, the father of the nation Gandhi was a *yogi* and an ascetic at heart. For Gandhi religion is a belief, which he practiced to the best of his ability all through his life. It seems quite evident that religion worked as an impulse in Gandhi's activities, not only at a personal plane but also in the political, social and economic domain of existence.

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The postscript of this work is the concluding part that highlights the spirit of integration unique to Gandhian philosophy. The centrality of soul-force as the uniting and cohesive force has been worked out. Gandhi holds that the greatest good of all, towards which mankind is consciously or unconsciously working can be achieved only when the personal and social life of an individual is propelled by the strength of soul-force.

Essentially a spiritual and religious man Gandhi's philosophy expresses itself through an integration of the diverse aspects of human existence with a love, truth and spirituality which is none other than the soul-force he had achieved through deep contemplation and perseverance. It is soul-force that has motivated the extraordinary ambition of integration. He translated all his thoughts into practice in his lifetime thus presenting a comprehensive view of life. Each idea is a further portrayal of all other aspects that both issue from it and support it. This work has been an exploration into the quintessential rudiments of Gandhian thought held together in a symbolic structure.

Chapter I

Life of Gandhi

“One man cannot do right in one department of life whilst he is occupied in doing wrong in any other department. Life is one indivisible whole.”

(*Young India*, 27.01.1927, CWMG, Vol.38, P.71)

Architect of Indian independence and one of the greatest men of twentieth century, Mohandas Karamchanda Gandhi was a multifaceted personality. He was a politician, a philosopher, a reformer, a spiritual leader and above all a humble human being always to be remembered for his selfless work and incessant struggle for the cause of humanity. He was a man of his own destiny, creating history for India and the rest of the world to follow. He was an eminent thinker with an inimitable approach to the conceptions and notions that marked the past. Gandhi was not an academician who would be required to make a systematic presentation of his ideas. In order to present his philosophy in an organised and logically cogent manner, his ideas have to be selected from his various speeches and writings. Gandhi was not a system builder, but with a deep understanding and insight, he could bring about the scheme of his beliefs in an appropriate and relevant manner so as to suit the requirements of the masses. His concepts underwent evolutionary and revolutionary changes constantly to confront any challenge he encountered.

Though he had many admirers and followers of his way of thinking and work, he also bore the brunt of severe criticism and was often misinterpreted. Gandhi inspired innumerable people during his lifetime and continues to be a source of inspiration for the world today. His ideas had a huge expanse for they were well experimented and most importantly held the interests of the common man at its centre. Mahatma Gandhi wrote his autobiography under the title- *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. This perhaps strikes the keynote of his life for in all that he said and did, he was continually striving to realize truth for himself and spread it to those around him. From one point of view, his was essentially a pragmatic approach specific to a given situation. That is why one often finds many a statement in his writings which taken in isolation, are often seemingly inconsistent with one another. On a closer scrutiny, his pragmatic approach to problems discloses a consistency inspired by Gandhi's commitment to certain basic and unchanging principles. He held on to his ideals passionately. We therefore find a deep underlying unity in all his statements in spite of their superficial inconsistencies. Battling for truth and the non-violent assertion of rights Gandhi was the first person in the history of the world who spread the message of non-violence to change the regime and social order of a nation. The entire gamut of his philosophical thought rests on two moral values of eternal relevance, namely, truth and non-violence. Gandhi was a courageous man who even within an impossible situation did maintain his belief that even though violence is better than cowardice, non-violence was essentially a virtue of the brave. He was remembered over the world for

practicing and preaching peace, non-violence, truth, honesty and purity and uniting Indians in a non-violent and peaceful struggle in achieving freedom from the colonial rule.

Gandhi was regarded as one of the most respected politician and spiritual leader of twentieth century. Ravindra Verma mentioned in his book, *The Spiritual Perceptions of Mahatma Gandhi* that:

“To millions of people in the world, Gandhi was a Mahatma, a great soul, an uncommon spiritual personage, a saintly man. But Gandhi himself never claimed to be a saint. He was indeed an uncommon saint, and as much an uncommon fighter and revolutionary: as much a man of renunciation as a man of spectacular and dauntless action. He was an unrelenting fighter who fought without anger or hatred, malice or bitterness. He loved even those whom he fought.”¹

The world knows him as the leader of Indian Nationalist Movement who liberated his country from the colonial power, but in a deeper sense he wanted to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on this earth. His teachings are of great relevance to the present day scenario that is marked by unending turmoil, not only for India but to the entire world. He spent precious years of his life working meticulously to remove colonial rule from India as well as for an overall betterment of humanity. Gandhi was born to a family with a simple way of life, and deep religious faith. His father, Karamchanda Gandhi, was an honest and dedicated man and these attributes are reflected in Gandhi's personality. He was a shy and fearful child who shied away from athletics, and

his lack of physical prowess enhanced his difficulties in school. Truth and religious faith was inherited by young Gandhi from his parents, especially his mother, Putlibai. Although Gandhi was an obedient child, at some course of his life he indulged in meat eating, smoking and some amount of stealing for which he later felt extremely repentant.

After the death of his father, Gandhi wanted to study law from England so that on his return he would be able to take up a similar task as that of his father's. He got permission from his mother after solemnly promising to keep away from wine, women and meat, a promise that he kept. During his stay at England, initially he tried to emulate the life style of an Englishman and learnt elocution, dancing and music. Soon after Gandhi gave up this expensive endeavor for he realised that it was a waste of resources and adopted a simple lifestyle for the remaining stay in England. Later he became interested in the Theosophical Society and was drawn to the reading of the Gita which became his life long companion and consolation when he felt distraught. He consulted the Gita for every problem that presented itself as an obstruction in his path. After completing his studies he became a barrister, returned to India and attempted practicing law but it neither brought satisfaction nor generated a good enough income.

In 1893 he went to South Africa to assist the counsel for a lawsuit, where a complete transformation came over the life of Gandhi. He learnt the value of self esteem and fearlessly fought for it. It was in South Africa that Gandhi moved on to becoming a courageous, resilient and potent leader never

succumbing to discrimination. South Africa, like India of then, was under the regime of colonial power which sustained extensive breach of human dignity and human rights. An incident in South Africa marked the turning point in the life of Gandhi when he was thrown out of a train for travelling in the first class compartment meant only for white people. Gandhi was subjected to untold shame and misery and while sitting in the cold at the railway platform, he contemplated between going back to India or fighting out the discrimination prevalent in South Africa and decided on pursuing the latter. Gandhi took upon himself the cause of the coloured people, especially the Indians living in South Africa. He started an organization and called it 'The Natal Indian Congress', which was to carry on the struggle of the Indians against racial discrimination. He also started a newspaper called *Indian Opinion* to propagate his ideas thereby preparing the community to fight for their rights. The paper became an organ circulating information about the struggle. Gandhi became known for his role as an activist adopting non-violent means and his activities soon became a matter of interest for world media.

Under the inspiration of John Ruskin's book *Unto this Last* and Tolstoy's book *Kingdom of God is Within You*, he started Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm respectively, on the ideals proffered by them. These settlements, the dwelling places for persons living in a community, were a means to eradicate one's needless possessions and to extend living in a society without any sort of discrimination. Through this he brought purification not only to his own life but the life of others by practicing, non possession and

equanimity. He also took a vow of brahamcharya which helped him to work assiduously for the rest of his life. Gandhi was of the belief that adopting brahmacharya had assisted him to concentrate on the concept of satyagraha. The Gandhian concept of satyagraha is a method of conflict resolution based on non-violent resistance directed against injustice, corruption and unjust laws of the society and state.² Satyagraha is passive resistance in its simplest sense and the literal meaning of truth force is non-violent resistance to a particular injustice. In 1906, he organized the first satyagraha campaign in protest against the proposed Asiatic ordinance directed against Indian immigrants in Transvaal. Gandhi exercised satyagraha officially when he organized the opposition against the Asiatic Registration Law, better known as the Black Act, in 1907. Indians under the leadership of Gandhi followed the path of satyagraha and mass protests were organized. Gandhi was sent to jail; the first of his jail sentences. This protest took seven years to get the Black Act repealed in 1914. In these years, in South Africa, Gandhi's concept and technique of non-violent defiance originated, though still in its nascent stages. This way, Gandhi was now a proven personality, fighting injustice with the weapons of non-violence and satyagraha. The South African experience left a deep and lasting imprint on Gandhi and influenced the struggle for freedom in India that he was to lead. As he began to lead first, local and then struggles on national scale in India, Gandhi's South African experience was a great help in successfully launching the freedom movement in India.

After twenty-one years of stay in South Africa continuously fighting against injustice and discrimination, Gandhi decided to return to India in 1915. For Gandhi the problems at home was more or less of the same nature as that of South Africa, as both were contesting for their rights against the white supremacy. Gandhi's non-violent struggles and activities in South Africa had been reported in India too and with Gokhale's initiative he was warmly welcomed back in India. Now Gandhi was eager to rid his countrymen of the sufferings and injustice inflicted upon them by the British Raj, but Gokhale, his political guru, advised him to first accustom himself with the conditions under which Indians existed. During the year of probation, Gandhi kept away from active participation in politics. In his speeches and writings he confined himself to the reform of the individual and social concerns and avoided political issues. His restraint was partly due to a self-disciplined silence and partly due to the fact that he was still familiarizing himself with the conditions in India and preparing himself up for the long struggle he had to undergo for the betterment of the people of India and their struggle for freedom. Through his travels all over India, Gandhi was deeply pained to see the inhuman conditions under which his poverty stricken countrymen were surviving. Gandhi took to wearing what the poorest Indian could afford to wear and completely dedicated his life for the achievement of freedom from the British, the oppressors. It was during this period that the title 'Mahatma', was conferred upon him by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. The title appealed to millions of fellow Indians who regarded him as saintly and sublime.

Gandhi addressed issues of inequality and injustice suffered by the Indians. On the invitation of Raj Kumar Shukla, an agriculturist of Bihar, he went to Champaran to solve the tax dispute of the indigo farmers and successfully convinced the authorities to abolish the vindictive tax through satyagraha, that was practiced for the first time by Gandhi on the Indian soil. Soon after he helped settle the labour unrest of mill workers brewing in Ahmadabad and later focused his attention to yet another peasants crisis in Kheda district of Gujarat, where he helped the farmers to settle their tax issues. These satyagrahas provided the foot hold for the launching of highly successful, though localised, satyagraha campaigns, which contained in them the capacity to solve the problems and put an end to the exploitation incurred by the colonial powers. The organization of the satyagrahas were a clear indication of Gandhi being the saviour and leader of the people of India.

At the end of the First World War, Gandhi focussed on his struggle for swaraj. Swaraj to him did not mean, mere political freedom from the whites but a self rule from within. When Indians were gathered to protest against the ruthless Rowlett Act, Jalianwala Massacre took place where hundreds of Indians were brutally killed by the British. Gandhi reacted to the Amritsar Massacre, with a three-day fast. Through the decade of 1920's, Gandhi strongly endorsed satyagraha and ahimsa by urging the masses to refrain from the path of violence in its minutest sense. He began encouraging self-reliance as the means to obtain freedom from the Imperial rule. Rowlett Act, Jalianwala Massacre and Montagu-Chelmsford report propelled Gandhi to oppose the

policies of English rule through non-cooperation in a non-violent way. During this period, Muslims in India also repelled by the British due to the mishandling of Ottoman Empire retaliated by starting the Khilafat Movement. Gandhi decided to stand with them and his policy of supporting the Khilafat Movement gave further strength to the non-cooperation movement. This programme comprised of surrender of titles, resignation from the nominated posts in government bodies and absenting from government functions. Acting upon this policy Gandhi returned his title of Kaiser-e-Hind back to the British government. He urged countrymen to boycott foreign goods and use khadi and indigenous goods to eliminate the effects of economic exploitation of India. The clarion call given by Gandhi to boycott foreign goods and adopt swadeshi swept through the country like a powerful wave. In fact it became a movement which later acted as a driving force for political action. Swadeshi translated simply meant, buy Indian. He promoted locally produced goods as a preference over the imported foreign commodities encouraging Indians to weave their own cloth and become self-sufficient. Gandhi presented khadi as an icon of nationalism, equality and self-reliance among the fellow Indians. It was his belief that reconstruction of the society and swaraj from the British rule can only be possible through khadi. Traditionally the spinning wheel or the charkha was considered to be the symbol of India's poverty and backwardness. Gandhi turned it into an icon of self-reliance and non-violence. Khadi enabled Gandhi to carry his message of swaraj and swadeshi to the people and to establish a bond with the poor Indians. Khadi was not only a symbol of self-reliance of

the masses of the nation but an effort towards mending the gap between wealthy and poor fellow Indians. He appealed to the people to practice and propagate the message of swadeshi all over India. Gandhi's economic order was based on the assumption of minimal standards of life and living for people.³ Gandhi stood for economic equality. His theory of trusteeship bears the testament of his commitment to usher in an egalitarian society by reducing the economic disparities. He made a breakthrough in the social structure by working for the eradication of the social evils such as untouchability and the creation of equal opportunities for the unprivileged for their social upliftment. Gandhi's life was not confined to the political arena only, for his philosophy and his vision called for the upliftment of the deprived sections of the nation, especially rural India where, according to him, India resides. His vision was to develop a society that could cater to the essential needs of common people. In Gandhi's view the greatest curse stalking the Indians was poverty and hunger and to combat these evils, he started a series of curriculum comprising of fourteen plans, known as constructive programmes to accommodate the minimum needs and betterment of the life of each person. Most of his programmes were geared towards village reconstruction and were devised to reform nation building. The constructive programme is an essential element towards the attainment of Gandhi's concept of swaraj, which was for him a road towards the goal of *Ramrajya*, the Kingdom of God, where everyone gets an equal share. Constructive programme was a revolutionary programme which geared the masses towards gaining self-respect. Gandhi's concern was to find a

way in which all persons can live together as complete human beings, in mutual acceptance and respect, through a reorientation of the economic, political, social, cultural and other activities to the benefit of as many members of society as possible. Sarvodaya, as envisioned by Gandhi meant the liberation of all human beings and of the society as a whole. It had socio-economical, religio-cultural, and political aspects to it. Gandhi's social engineering consisted of facilitating a classless society with the well-being of every individual as its primary goal. He called this sarvodaya which meant 'the welfare of all', inspired by Ruskin's book *Unto this Last*. Gandhi worked for the welfare of all sections of the people; with a greater inclination towards the poor, the downtrodden, the exploited and the least.

The life and philosophy of Gandhi cannot be appreciated sufficiently without bringing into consideration the eleven vows of Gandhi. These eleven promises or declarations are the steps towards gaining higher consciousness, higher realization and higher accomplishments without any hierarchy between them. These Gandhian cardinal virtues: *satya* or truth, *ahimsa* or non-violence, *brahmacharya* or celibacy, *asteya* or nonstealing, *asangraha* or non-possession, *sharir shram* or bread labour, *aswada* or control of palate, *bhayavarjana* or fearlessness, *sarva dharma sambhav* or religious equality, *swadeshi* or use of local products, and *sparsh bhavana* or removal of untouchability, help an individual to self realisation through self purification. Some of these virtues were being observed for years in India while others were

the results of the influence of western thinkers on Gandhi and of his own way of thinking.

By the end of third decade of the twentieth century, various groups in the country once again rallied for political freedom looking up to Gandhi for leading the way. On 26th January 1930, under the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru, congress issued a declaration known as *poorna swaraj* or Complete Independence Declaration. Millions of countrymen solemnly took the pledge, and thereafter this day was observed as Independence Day. The declaration held compliance to withhold taxes and the organization of a nationwide protest against British taxes which initiated the idea of civil disobedience. On 12th March 1930, Gandhi began his famous Dandi march with his followers from Sabarmati Ashram heading towards Dandi. On 6th April 1930, broke the law by making salt and refused to pay salt tax. The vigor created by this protest was transmitted all over India. The entire event stood as an example of non-violent civil disobedience. This episode, marked as the corner stone in the history of Indian independence, mobilized the masses of the country and established Gandhi as the leader of the masses in the eyes of British empire.

Gandhi continuously fought for the cause of downtrodden especially the untouchables standing by the *harijans* for their betterment. In 1932, the government gave the *harijans* a separate electorate under its new policy. Gandhi protested by observing a six day fast thereby forcing the government to repeal it and make arrangements for the untouchables in the same electorate regardless of the hierarchy and their position in the hindu society. Gandhi

believed that the upliftment of untouchables would mean a radical change in the prevalent social order.

With the outburst of World War II in 1939, the Viceroy unanimously announced that India would support the troops of England in the war. In response to this the Indian Independence Movement was invigorated and Gandhi initiated a satyagraha at a very large scale resulting in the arrest of thousands of protesters. Unable to bear with the consequences of a mass protest in the midst of war, the British government announced that it would liberate India at the end of World War II. Gandhi, wanting Independence sooner, drafted a resolution calling for British to quit India. He called all countrymen to intensify the struggle and gave the famous slogan of 'Do or Die'. Quit India became the most intensified movement in Indian freedom struggle invoking mass arrests. The British arrested Gandhi and the entire Congress Working Committee. Gandhi declared that the movement would not stop no matter how many individual acts of violence were committed. He was released from the prison in 1944. Indian Independence was within sight.

At the same time Muslim League passed its resolution demanding the partition of India before the Britishers quit India. Mahatma Gandhi had never accepted in principle the two nation theory that would divide the Hindus and the Muslims. He tried hard to convince both of them of its pernicious character. He continued to the last day of his life to instill the lesson of unity among the communities of India. Gandhi desired a united India where Hindus and Muslims could live together with harmony but Hindu-Muslim riots erupted in

several parts of India. Gandhi tried very hard to convince the leaders but to no avail. On 15th August 1947, the British quit India and the nation got independence but there were widespread Hindu-Muslim clashes and innumerable lives were lost. This was not the manner Gandhi wanted swaraj to be attained. On 30th January 1948, at a prayer meeting Gandhi was assassinated by Nathu Ram Godse, a right wing activist. The country was steeped in mourning and grief. It was ironical that the apostle of peace and non-violence had himself fallen victim to violence.

Great people have admirers and followers as well as critics, and Gandhi was no exception. Not all persons in his time and thereafter, are admirers of Gandhi and some have criticized his thought and action acutely. Marxists like R. Palme Dutt have criticized Gandhi for endorsing non-violence instead of revolutionary class struggle to end economic injustice. Humayun Kabir applauded Gandhi as a religious pluralist whereas a Hindu nationalist like V. D. Savarkar condemned him for denying Hindu primacy.⁴ Gandhi's martyrdom did not mark an end to his principles and the philosophy he practiced. Martin Luther King Jr., Aung San Suu Kyi, Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are some of the leaders who regarded Gandhi as their guide. Nearly sixty-seven years after his demise, Gandhi is remembered for his ideas of satyagraha, truth and non-violence. Gandhi had travelled from truth to higher truth with non-violence and satyagraha as the means to that end. In the present world scenario with the prevailing crisis in the underdeveloped world, the ever growing threat of terrorism and the perilous pace of nuclear terror, it seems likely that

Gandhi's ideas and philosophy will become increasingly relevant. Gandhi did not pose himself as a champion of his doctrines especially non-violence and truth. Gandhi believed that he was born to show people the better way. He said:

“God...has chosen me as His instrument for presenting non-violence to India for dealing with her many ills.”⁵He further stated: “It was his mission to convert every Indian and finally the whole world to non-violence for regulating mutual relations whether political, economic, religious or social. There is no other way of purging the whole of evil.”⁶

Gandhi is not a systematic philosopher or a theologian but a practical man with a practical sense. He possessed what an average Indian possesses, namely, a practical philosophy of life, unformulated and non-conscious perhaps, but manifest in attitudes and his way of life. However, his synthesis was unique. In spite of what one can glean from Gandhi's life and writings, the task will be very tough because it will involve attempting to trace foot prints on a path that only great experience can decipher.

Chapter II

Influences on Gandhi

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.”

(*Young India*, 1.6.1921, CWMG, Vol.23, P.215)

There is a moment in every person's life when he changes his beliefs or way of living. He acts according to the potentiality he inherits and the things he grasps from the surroundings. A man develops into a great personality if he successfully transcends the greatness of the others. Influence can come from individuals, informal groups, and formal institutions such as schools. Gandhi has repeatedly acknowledged the legends under whose influences he became what he did. As Gandhi wrote in his autobiography that:

“Children inherit the qualities of the parents, no less than their physical features. Environment does play an important part, but the original capital on which a child starts in life is inherited from its ancestors. I have also seen children successfully surmounting the effects of an evil inheritance. That is due to purity being an inherent attribute of the soul.”¹

Gandhi gained maturity through a continuing interface with the various facets of human civilization, and more pertinently from his ever evolving experiments with truth in the course of his life. Gandhi never hesitated in acknowledging the wealth of ideas he received from his fore runners. His writings, speeches, especially his autobiography, marvelously depicts the views, the roots and the influences that had moulded and shaped his thoughts. The incident at Pietermaritzburg station in South Africa, fetched Gandhi from the crossroads and led him to the path of the making of the mahatma.

Each person comes under some influence of their family, relatives and friends, their religion, their culture, their educational background and the environment in which they are nurtured. Gandhi regards himself as an adherent of Raychand bhai, Ruskin and Tolstoy with Gopal Krishna Gokhale as his mentor. He was deeply under the influence of some Indian and western thinkers. Gandhi being a religious and God fearing man, imbibed the valuable teachings of Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Hinduism and Christianity. Gandhi also took inspiration from the ancient Indian scriptures i.e. Ramayana, Mahabharata, the Upanishads and the Gita. Gandhi admired the Gita the most among his inspirational sources. For him Gita was the daily reference book for him.

Influences during formative age:

In his autobiography, Gandhi admits that the chief source of inspiration in his formative years came from his own family, consisting of his father, mother,

wife and the maid, Rambha. Gandhi was quite influenced by his school also. Moreover, at a very tender age, apart from the direct inspirations he had with persons around him, the two plays 'Shravana Pitribhakti ' and 'Harishchandra' made a large impact on his mind.

Truth and non-violence for which Gandhi dedicated his entire life was inherited to a greater extent from his father, Karamchanda Gandhi who held the position of the prime minister of the state. No one can escape to notice the amount of impact his father had on him while reading Gandhi's autobiography in which he presents a recollection of many such incidents which depict his father as a brave, truthful, and generous personality. Though his father was a worldly person, he had little ambition for wealth for even though held a high position he owned very little property. This trait of his father was the basis of the doctrine of *aparigraha* or voluntary poverty. Also his father was greatly acclaimed for his loyalty to the rulers of the state. He would unhesitatingly face severe hardships and suffering rather than succumb to any wrongdoing. Gandhi also possessed all these personality traits, which must have been an inheritance from his father, manifesting themselves as and when the situation demanded, throughout his life.

Gandhi was immensely influenced by his mother, Putlibai. She was a religious and a morally upright woman, who gave young Gandhi the lesson of saintliness. According to Gandhi, his mother could take the severest vow and keep it without any difficulty. This quality of self restraint visible in Gandhi's observation of fasting and holding on to vows has undoubtedly his mother's

influence on it. Gandhi strictly followed a disciplined existence throughout his life, and here too the deep influence of his mother is evident. While going to England, Gandhi promised his mother not to indulge in undesirable activities during his stay there. He took a vow and solemnly followed it and later stated in his autobiography that: “A vow is a vow....my mother’s definition was the definition binding on me.”²

The basic teachings of Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism were instilled into the mind of young Gandhi by his mother. Which cultivated in him an even regard for all religions and later in the life of Gandhi it manifested itself as tolerance and regard for the other religions and sects prevalent in this world.

Gandhi was deeply impressed by, the religious fervor of Rambha, the helper of his family. Although he spent little time with her, her influence was deeply rooted in his personality. Gandhi had a fear of ghosts and evil spirits in his tender age. Rambha told him to chant the name of Rama when he was scared. He acknowledged this fact in his autobiography as: “It is due to the seed sown by that great good woman Rambha that Rama nama is an infallible remedy for me.”³

This Rama nama was so deeply embedded in the life of Gandhi that “Hey Ram” was the last word he uttered when a fanatic shot and killed him. He learned the lessons of discipline from his headmaster Dorabji Edulji Gimi in Alfred High school. From school onwards he also learned never to lie and refrain from cheating in examination; qualities that worked as assets throughout his life. Gandhi greatly loved and respected his wife, Kasturba whose togetherness and influence lasted

with him till her dying day. Her tireless service, immeasurable patience and enormous love, helped his personality achieve its highest potential. It is quite clear that Kasturba contributed a great deal in shaping Gandhi's ideas, as he is known to the world today.

Influence of his Contemporaries:

Gandhi had an astute interest in the ideas of contemporary writers and thinkers and had no reluctance in adopting them when required. His fellow freedom fighters namely Feroz Shah Mehta, Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak, Dada Bhai Naoroji, Rabindra Nath Tagore and his political mentor Gopal Krishna Gokhale had made their imprint on the intellect of Gandhi. He was also very fond of Raychand Bhai, whom he affectionately called Kavi, a spotless personality in the eye of Gandhi. On his return from South Africa, Gandhi met several Indian leaders. The initial impact was made by Mehta, Tilak and Gokhlale, who were the most influential figures of the Indian struggle for independence. To him:

“Sir Pherozeshah had seemed to me like the Himalaya, the Lokamanya like the ocean. But Gokhale was the Ganges. One could have a refreshing bath in the holy river. The Himalaya was unsalable, and one could not easily launch forth on the sea, but the Ganges invited one to its bosom.”⁴

The principles and policies of Tilak and Gokhle formed a deep impression on the personality of young Gandhi. Tilak was an extremist in his approach and Gandhi appreciated the steps Tilak took in order to liberate India from the colonial power.

He was influenced by Tilak's mobilization of the masses and particularly his effort against the partition of Bengal although he did not endorse Tilak's favouring violent means in achieving it. Gandhi regarded Gokhale as his political teacher and considered him to be a man of great vision. Gandhi described his association with Gokhale as:

“Gokhale taught me that the dream of every Indian who claims to love his country should be not to glorify the country in language but to spiritualize its political life and institutions. He inspired my life and is still inspiring it in that I wish to purify myself and spiritualize myself. I have dedicated myself to that ideal. I may fail, and to the extent I fail, I am an unworthy disciple of my master.”⁵

Gokhale was quite a few years older to Gandhi and was a father figure to him. Much of Gandhi's political and social work followed the guidance and advice given by Gokhale. Gandhi's political education under the tutorship of Gokhale led to the betterment of the political and social order of the day.

Gandhi was also influenced by the 'Grand Old Man' of Indian freedom struggle, Dada Bhai Naoroji. Gandhi had immense respect for him and almost worshipped him. In Gandhi's words:

“Whenever an address by him was announced, I would attend it, listen to him from a corner of the hall and go away after having feasted my eyes and ears.”⁶

Naoroji calculated the per capita income of the fellow Indians which was almost negligible as compared to the British personnel. This was an indicator of the exploitation faced by the people of India. This instigated Gandhi to initiate a social programme to uplift the status of the poorest of the poor people of India.

Rabindra Nath Tagore was also a towering personality of India's cultural and political domain. Tagore's influence on Gandhi was gentle and yet potent. Gandhi liked Tagore's stance of taking the argument to its logical end with total conviction. Gandhi always tried to learn from the Tagore and addressed him as Gurudev. Gandhi was impressed by Tagore's views on non-violence, in his Drama '*Prayoschitta*' publicised in the later part of first decade of the twentieth century. Gandhi also admired Tagore's contribution to rural education. He was also deeply inspired by Tagore's poem, '*Ekla Chalo*' and soon this poem became the central theme of Gandhi's life.

There was a strong influence and imprint of Raychand Bhai's thought on Gandhi. Louise Fischer in his book *Mahatma Gandhi, His Life & Times* wrote about Gandhi's dependence on Raychand:

“Gandhi was impressed by his religious learning, his upright character and his passion for self-realization. Raychandbhai's, deeds, Gandhi felt, were guided by his desire for truth and godliness. Gandhi trusted him completely. In a crisis, Gandhi ran to Raychandbhai for confession and comfort.”⁷

Though Raychand was a businessman, he was a poet by temperament and had vast knowledge of Indian scriptures. On account of his enormous understanding of the scriptures and the present world order, he was known as *Shatavadhani*, i.e. one who knows hundred things simultaneously. He was well acquainted with the tenets of Jainism and created a quest for Hindu scriptures in Gandhi. To quote Gandhi:

“I have tried to meet the heads of various faiths, and I must say that no one else has ever made on me the impression that Raychandbhai did. His words went straight home to me. His intellect compelled as great a regard from me as his moral earnestness, and deep down in me was the conviction that he would never willingly lead me astray and would always confide to me his innermost thoughts. In my moments of spiritual crisis, therefore, he was my refuge.”⁸

Raychand gave Gandhi numerous advice to better his life ethically and spiritually. He advised Gandhi to follow brahmacharya or celibacy, especially within married life. Thomas Weber in his book *Gandhi as disciple and mentor* mention this:

“It seems that Raychand was also instrumental in implanting in Gandhi seeds of a thought that would lead, for the Mahatma-to-be, to the logical conclusion of celibacy even within marriage.”⁹

Raychand steadily moulded Gandhi's thoughts to conform to the Indian philosophical doctrines and its spiritual fervor. This paved the path to understand and realise the concepts of non-attachment, truth, non-violence, universal

benevolence from these Indian scriptures, which were then preached and practiced by Gandhi all his life.

Thus Gandhi was under a deep inspiration of some gifted personalities of India who contributed a great deal to his outlook and were instrumental in chalking the entire trajectory of his life; his struggle for the freedom of India and the upliftment of the downtrodden masses.

Influence of Western Thinkers:

Gandhi had some reservation against western civilization. In his book *Hind Swaraj* he has discussed some of its short comings. Shifting the flaws aside, he related too much that was positive in it and made a place for it in his heart. Louis Fischer also strengthens this point as:

“He condemned some features of Western civilization and had learned from others, he told them. Moreover, opinions should be judged by content not by their source.”¹⁰

Gandhi was deeply indebted to some western thinkers such as Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau, Socrates, Plato, Carlyle and Emerson.

Among the western thinkers, Count Leo Tolstoy, a Russian writer and thinker influenced Gandhi, the most. Gandhi was overwhelmed by his book *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. Thoughts of Tolstoy made a firm and abiding impression on him. He wrote in his autobiography that:

“It was forty years back, when I was passing through a severe crisis of skepticism and doubt that I came across his book, 'The Kingdom of God is within you' and was deeply impressed by it. I was at that time a believer in violence. Its reading cured me of my skepticism and made me a firm believer in Ahimsa. He was the great apostle of non-violence that the present age has produced.”¹¹

From this statement of Gandhi it was quite clear that the doctrine of ahimsa (non-violence), which was the fundamental principle of his entire life, bore the strong influence of Tolstoy. Love was at the core of Tolstoy's teachings and he applied it to all walks of his life for resolving any conflicts. Gandhi accepted the non-resistance and love and applied it in a far more positive manner by moulding the negative aspects of non-resistance into a far more positive and potent resistance, which Gandhi named as satyagraha. Although the concept of satyagraha was mainly inspired by the Tolstoyan spirit of love, the technique was basically extended by Gandhi and in a much more effective way.

The Kingdom of God is Within You is based on the teachings of Jesus. The essence of this book is primarily Christian anarchism and logical interpretation of 'The New Testament'. Tolstoyan anarchism was inspired by the Christian doctrine of non-resistance. Gandhi differentiated his anarchism by refraining from violence. Gandhi not only preached anarchism but practiced it also. His non-

violent movement, in his struggle for freedom, was based on the principles of philosophical anarchism.

Joseph J. Doke, the biographer of Gandhi is of the opinion that the writings of Tolstoy especially on ethical, religious and social evils were traced out, read and absorbed by Gandhi and later set into practice. The formation and working of the Tolstoy Farm in South Africa was completely based on Tolstoyan teachings and principles. His approach was that of a seeker eager to receive the vital enlightenment from the teacher. He admired the teachings of Tolstoy as a reflection of beliefs that were imprinted on Gandhi's mind from indigenous sources. Though Gandhi never mentioned at any occasion that Tolstoy was his mentor or guru, but due to the influence of Tolstoy perceptible in most of his principles and action, Doke called him "a disciple of Tolstoy"¹². Gandhi's philosophy of equality, renunciation, non exploitation and bread labour were due to the inspiration of Tolstoy on Gandhi, which lasted longer than any other.

If one takes a note of the writings of Gandhi it becomes clear that he was determined to alter his political doctrines in accordance with the ideals of Tolstoy and his social principles as given by John Ruskin. In his autobiography, Gandhi said about persons who make a deep mark on his life. He said:

"Three moderns have left a deep impress on my life, and captivated me: Raychand Bhai by his living contact; Tolstoy by his book, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*; and Ruskin by his *Unto this Last*."¹³

Ruskin was a writer, reformer and a thinker. It was a casual incident that brought Ruskin into the life of Gandhi. When he was in South Africa, while making a train journey he read Ruskin's book *Unto this Last*. The book was so absorbing that he read through the night and it shook the very being of young Gandhi who decided that very moment that he would live the life prescribed in it. Gandhi stated this event in his autobiography under the title of 'The magic spell of a book'. He wrote:

“The book was impossible to lay aside, once I had begun it....I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin, and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life.”¹⁴

This book came to Gandhi as a gift of God to bring alive the humanitarian convictions and potentialities asleep in him. Gandhi translated this book by Ruskin in Gujarati under the title of *sarvodaya*. The Phoenix Settlement was the implementation of Ruskin's thought into practice by Gandhi. In this settlement the basic precept of Ruskin was put into reality which was the initiation of converting the ideas of Ruskin into reality by Gandhi. The social and economic doctrine of Gandhi was influenced by the teaching of Ruskin in one or more ways. Ruskin's concept of 'socialism' had very little affinity with the materialistic approach. Likewise Gandhi's socialism was inclined towards the positive role of the individual in the society rather than it to be state a regulated socialism. Gandhi was also inspired by Ruskin's thought on eradicating economic inequality in the

society that leads to exploitation and hardship. For Ruskin, the phrase ‘Unto the last’ would mean also the uplift of the last i.e. *antyodaya*. Gandhi took a step further than just economic equality for he went beyond upliftment of greatest numbers to the upliftment of all, i.e. *sarvodaya*.

Gandhi deduced three principal teachings from Ruskin’s *Unto this Last*. The first one seeks to deduce that the good of an individual is not possible until and unless it is meant for the good for all. The second stands for the condition of equality the third and the last was that agriculture and labour are the noblest occupations of all. The last point was completely new to Gandhi and least convincing. Louis Fischer in his book, *Mahatma Gandhi: His life & Times* commented:

“But Ruskin did not say, as Gandhi did, that the work of all has the same value. On the contrary, Ruskin stressed, more than anything else, 'the impossibility of equality' between men.”¹⁵

The influential bond between Ruskin and Gandhi was studied by Elizabeth McLaughlin, in her book *Ruskin and Gandhi*, she points out in the following words:

“Ruskin influenced Gandhi’s conception of soul-force as a substitute for physical force; he was the chief source of Gandhian economic idea; but above all, he changed Gandhi as a person.”¹⁶

Although Gandhi was influenced by Ruskin, but by making an amendment in the economic model offered by Ruskin and then implementing it, such that it becomes beneficial to all, Gandhi makes that concept his own.

Henry David Thoreau, an American philosopher, also influenced Gandhi to a great extent. Gandhi came across his paper entitled Essay *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* when he was in prison in South Africa in 1908. Gandhi, was deeply impressed. He wrote:

“The essay seemed to be so convincing and truthful that I felt the need of knowing more of Thoreau, and I came across your Life of him, his ‘Walden,’ and other shorter essays, all of which I read with great pleasure and equal profit.”¹⁷

Some scholars were of the opinion that Gandhi protested against the South African law a year before he read Thoreau. But Thoreau’s theory did give a more potent framework for Gandhi’s programme of non-violence as well as new dimensions for his principle of non-cooperation in the struggle for freedom. Thoreau, in turn had learnt a lot from ancient Indian scriptures and personalities. He was an admirer of Buddhism, Gita, Upanishad, and Puranas.

When faced with colonial prejudicial laws, Thoreau declared that people could either ‘obey them, amend them, or transgress them.’ With respect to the ‘Slave Law of 1850’, Thoreau chose to transgress. Gandhi was much impressed by the principles of civil disobedience. Gandhi was also impressed by Thoreau’s plea

for supremacy of self-realisation under all circumstances. That essay could be viewed as a guideline for the satyagrahis participating in freedom struggle.

Thoreau's influence on Gandhi was so profound that in the moment of difficulty in the political affairs he applied the Thoreauvian ideals and principles without hesitation. Gandhi wrote a letter to his American friend, praising and acclaiming Thoreau by saying:

“You have given me a teacher in Thoreau, who furnished me through his essay on the ‘Duty of Civil Disobedience’ scientific confirmation of what I was doing in South Africa”¹⁸

A question may be asked: Did Gandhi adopt the concept of satyagraha from Thoreau? This fact was clarified by Gandhi as:

“The statement that I had derived my idea of civil disobedience from the writings of Thoreau is wrong. The resistance to authority in South Africa was well advanced before I got the essay of Thoreau on civil disobedience. But the movement was then known as passive resistance. As it was incomplete I had coined the word satyagraha for the Gujarati readers.”¹⁹

Thoreau's influence on Gandhi remains without doubt and scholars time and again reiterate the deep impression of his masterly treatise. From the formative period in South Africa to the last days of his political life, Gandhi quoted Thoreau to strengthen his stance. As he wrote in *Young India* at the time of Non Cooperation Movement:

“We must voluntarily put up with the losses and inconveniences that arise from having to withdraw our support from a Government that is ruling against our will. Possession of power and riches is a crime under an unjust government; poverty in that case is a virtue, says Thoreau.”²⁰

Gandhi said at one instance that: “From Thoreau and Ruskin I could find out arguments in favour of our fight.”²¹ Gandhi had an open heart for the good views, no matter what the source may be. He was eager to read and understand the thinkers and great personalities of the west also. He was influenced by Emerson, an American philosopher. Emerson’s philosophy revolved around the principle of self-reliance, promoting individualism and moral enhancement. Gandhi first read Emerson while he was studying in England. The suggestion to read Emerson’s essay came from his cousin Maganlal. Gandhi was so inspired by Emerson that he could not resist recommending him. In his letter to Maganlal, he stated as:

“Please tell Maganlal bhai that I would advise him to read Emerson’s essays... The essays to my mind contain the teaching of Indian wisdom in a Western garb.”²²

Gandhi’s association with the Emerson Club in South Africa shows the affinity of his thoughts towards the American writer. Gandhi placed the Greek philosopher, Socrates on a high pedestal. His acquaintance with Socrates’ philosophy began quite early. He admired Socrates as the champion of truth, which is the cardinal doctrine of Gandhi’s philosophy. He was so influenced by

Socrates, who gave up his life to uphold the truth that he wrote a chapter on Socrates as “Story of Soldier of Truth”. He reiterated the sacrifice of Socrates for the sake of truth, in his writings from time to time. The thinkers of the west aided and moulded the thinking of Gandhi and gave his doctrines a new dimension, that existed in his mind alongside the knowledge of the Indian scriptures and culture.

Influence of Major Religions:

In his early days Gandhi was not much interested in religious affairs. He gradually developed interest first, in his own religion and then other religions because of his father. Jains, Hindus, Parsis, Buddhists and Muslims used to visit his father for political as well religious discussions and his home was a sort of center for religious dialogue. He resented Christianity in his early years due to the belief of Indians that Christian missionaries regularly converted Indians into Christianity by offering them support as an incentive. Gandhi recalled his upbringing in the light of religions of India as:

“In Rajkot, however, I got an early grounding in toleration for all branches of Hinduism and sister religions.”²³

Though Gandhi was born in a hindu family where he got a good exposure and knowledge of Jainism his acquaintance with hinduism was diminutive. Gandhi read the english translation of Bhagavad Gita for the first time, when he went to London to study law. Here he also found books *Key to Theosophy*, The Bible especially The New Testament and *Light of Asia*, a book on Lord Buddha. In this

way Gandhi adopted the basic teachings of all the religions and these were the guiding force behind his principles. With this background, Gandhi forged his own ideas on spirituality, religion and God.

Gandhi had unhesitatingly delved into the ancient scriptures of India. Hinduism being the oldest religion of India, is known worldwide for its non-violent and pacifist traditions. The well known doctrine of *advaita* (non dualist) ‘*tat vam asi*’ stands for spiritual immanence and unity of all the creatures. More over it became evident from the archeological excavations that people living in ‘Indus valley civilization’ were majorly peace-loving. Ramayana and Mahabharata also preached peace, truth, victory of good over evil.

Gandhi explained hinduism in his own peculiar way as the confluence of truth and non-violence. He defined it as:

“If I were asked to define the Hindu creed I should simply say: ‘Search after Truth through non-violent means. A man may not believe in God and still call himself a Hindu. Hinduism is a relentless pursuit after Truth.’”²⁴

Being a vaishnava hindu, he himself was called a sanatan hindu, a vedantist, who found comfort under the shadow of Gita. His philosophy and doctrine was in keeping with the Hindu scriptures. To quote Gandhi:

“My notions were an outcome of a study of the Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Upanishads, etc.”²⁵

Philosophy in the hindu scriptures is the direct or indirect outcome of vedic literature which is the most ancient literature of sanatan dharma and philosophy. The vedas were not the outcome of theories or the philosophy of any particular saint but are the outcome of the insights of many saints and seers in different periods arising according to the needs of a given time. They upheld eternal concepts, the knowledge of which helped in a better way of living. Thus Vedas become the foundation for all Indian philosophical thought.

Gandhi had great faith in the instructions of the vedas for it provided the light that made a person perfect in day to day affairs. In the words of Gandhi:

“For me the Vedas are divine and unwritten. 'The letter killeth.' It is the spirit that giveth the light. And the spirit of the Vedas is purity, truth, innocence, chastity, humility, simplicity, forgiveness, godliness, and all that makes a man or woman noble and brave.”²⁶

Gandhi tried to interpret the meaning of the message of vedas. Gandhi realised that truth is an all pervading reality, which he identified with God. He also extracted from vedas the concept of varnashram, which he adopted for his scheme of social upliftment of the nation.

Upanishads are the collection of text of earliest religious philosophy. Upanishads are also replete with the literature that deals with the betterment of human beings. Non-violence is mentioned in the Chandogya Upanishad. Max Mueller, a German historian in his book *Sacred Books of the East* wrote that in the

Upanishad that: “It is the common duty of all the castes to abstain from injuring living beings.”²⁷ Gandhi expressed the meaning of Upanishads in his life as:

“The Upanishads proved a great source of peace to me. One statement in them has made a deep impression on my mind; in substance, it means that everything one does must be done for the welfare of the soul. The thought is expressed in words of great beauty. There is much else in it worthy of attention.”²⁸

Gandhi was influenced by the *Chandogya* and other Upanishads but *Ishopanishad* was almost embedded in his heart. He referred to it in trying to overcome both political and social issues during the later part of his life. He considered the first verse of *Ishopanishad* as the gist of hinduism. In the words of Gandhi:

“I learnt it by heart in Yeravda Jail. But it did not then captivate me, as it has done during the past few months, and I have now come to the final conclusion that if all the Upanishads and all the other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes, and if only the first verse in the Ishopanishad were left intact in the memory of Hindus, Hinduism would live forever.”²⁹

The ancient book *Yogasutra*, which Gandhi read in the early twentieth century, says that ahimsa was one of the five cardinal principles of a *yogi*. The tradition of ahimsa was also depicted in the two great epics of India, i.e. Ramayana and Mahabharata. For Gandhi, Rama was a rescuer from all fear. He mentioned in his autobiography that his father used to read the Ramayana daily

and he used to listen to its verses. He was almost thirteen at that time and the Ramayana formed a deep impression on him. For him Ramayana was “the greatest book in all devotional literature.”³⁰ Ramayana was of a great instrumental value in the formation of Gandhi’s thought. He was also influenced by Mahabharata. It was generally perceived that Mahabharata is a depiction of a violent and bloody war. But to Gandhi, violence and war ends with the establishment of peace and non-violence. It depends on the individual’s perception what he gains from it. Gandhi described a shloka which conveys the truth of Mahabharata:

“According to Mahabharata it means observance of ahimsa, satya, non-stealing, cleanliness and self-restraint. As I have been endeavoring to follow these to the best of my ability”³¹

Moreover Gandhi thought that Mahabharata was not just a poem from Vyas but it was a conquest between good and the evil. In his words:

“I have never looked upon the Mahabharata as a mere record of earthly warfare. In the garb of an epic the poet has described the eternal warfare within the individual as well as in society, between Truth and Untruth, Violence and Non-violence, Right and Wrong.”³²

Gandhi wanted to build India in the image of the *Ramrajya* as depicted in the epic Ramayana, after it gained independence.

It was in 1889, when Gandhi got an english edition of Gita from an English friend Edwin Arnold named as *The Song Celestial* that the very first reading of

this book made a deep emotional impact on him and he held it close to his heart.

Eknath Easwaran in his book *Gandhi the Man* says that:

“The Bhagawad Gita had always been near him while he was a child. Ironically, he did not begin to glimpse its practicality until he was in England”³³

Gita is a depiction of the epic of Mahabharata in the form of a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna. Arjun’s questions are the practical query regarding the difficulties of life and Krishna’s answers are a practical advice for overcoming those problems. For Gandhi, Gita was a great comfort to him in the time of difficulties and problems and became his guiding force to tide over the most difficult situations. It also guided Gandhi in effectively working out his doctrines. Gandhi wrote about his dependence on Gita in his autobiography as:

“I regard it today as the book par excellence for the knowledge of Truth. It has afforded me invaluable help in my moments of gloom.”³⁴

His secretary for most part of his life in India, Mahadev Desai recalled that every moment in Gandhi’s life was an effort to live according to the principles of the Bhagvad Gita. No other book impacted his life more than Gita. Gandhi mentioned the effectiveness and place of Bhagvad Gita in his life as:

“When doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, and when I see not one ray of light on the horizon I turn to the Bhagavad Gita, and find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the

midst of overwhelming sorrow. My life has been full of external tragedies and if they have not left any visible and indelible effect on me, I owe it to the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita.”³⁵

To him, Gita was a book for spiritual reference. He learned from Gita that religion never becomes a hindrance to a life lived in a material world. It is misnomer that in business and day today affairs, religion has no place and it is only meant for the purpose of attaining spiritual salvation. Gita dispels all such misconceptions. Gandhi said about the author of Gita that:

“He has drawn no line of demarcation between salvation and wordly pursuits. On the contrary, he has shown that religion must rule even our wordly pursuits. I have felt that the *Gita* teaches us that what cannot be followed out in day today practice cannot be called religion.”³⁶

The teaching of sixty-second and sixty-third verses of the second chapter of Gita impressed him the most. Gandhi wrote:

“The verses in the second chapter made a deep impression on my mind, and they still ring in my ears. The book struck me as one of priceless worth. The impression has ever since been growing on me with the result that I regard it today as the book par excellence for the knowledge of Truth. It has afforded me invaluable help in my moments of gloom.”³⁷

Almost all his life was lived under the refuge of Gita. It was the source of his joy and pleasure, support and strength, a reference book for all the difficult and insurmountable problems both in his private and public life. Gandhi expressed himself thus:

“Today the Gita is not only my Bible or my Koran; it is more than that—it is my mother. I lost my earthly mother who gave me birth long ago; but this eternal Mother has completely filled her place by my side ever since. She has never changed, She has never failed me. When I am in difficulty or distress, I seek refuge in Her bosom.”³⁸

Following on the path paved by the Gita, Gandhi reached his destination of a divine life. Gandhi called this his supreme end and this state of being self-realisation. This state of renunciation that lies at the very root of self-realisation as preached by the Gita immensely influenced Gandhi and contributed towards an intensification of his commitment not only towards his fellow Indians but for the entire humanity. Almost all his thought can be seen to be the influence of the teachings of Gita. Sarvodaya, bread labour, trusteeship, *aparigraha* and *sanbhav* are a few doctrines of Gandhi that can be traced back to the philosophy of Gita. Gita was firmly the decisive factor in shaping Gandhi's philosophy, the means and the ends Gandhi forged for himself.

Buddhism is a religion which has its roots in India. While Buddha retained the ethical ideas of orthodox religions, he rejected the authority of vedas and even priests. He also rejected caste system. He was mainly interested in providing a

remedy to those caught in suffering. His teachings were confined to four truths of life and the eight fold path. Gandhi was deeply influenced with the teachings and life of Buddha, when he read *Light of Asia*, in England. He did not distinguish Buddhism from traditional *sanatan dharma*, however he found that Buddhism attempted to address non-violence in a clearer and more prudent way. In his autobiography Gandhi wrote about the book *Light of Asia* that:

“I read it with even greater interest than I did the Bhagavad Gita. Once I had begun it I could not leave off... My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the Gita, The Light of Asia and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly.”³⁹

The central theme of Buddhist philosophy is non-violence. Ahimsa in Buddhist teachings was depicted both as love and avoidance of injury to self and others. The Buddhist concept of non-violence is more practical and great extremes are avoided. The path of Buddha is known as ‘Middle Path’. Gandhi had immense respect and admiration for Buddha, one of the greatest icons of peace in the world. After the World War II, Gandhi emphasised the relevance of Buddhism in the following words:

“If Lord Buddha was on earth in the body at this moment, such a war would be impossible... Asoka’s is perhaps the only instance of a great king having voluntarily abandoned war and adopted peaceful methods.”⁴⁰

The teachings of Buddha contributed greatly to the development of his thought. His concept of sarvodaya has its origin in the amalgamation of the teachings of Vedantic and Buddhist concept of *savabhutahita* or the good for all living being. Buddhism laid substantial stress on celibacy, non-stealing and non-possession. Also the concept of universal love, sacrifice and renunciation for promoting the well-being of the world, had been advocated by Buddha. Gandhi being immensely influenced by Buddha adopted and applied the same code of morality. In his autobiography Gandhi praised Buddha's compassion for the universe:

“Look at Gautama's compassion!’ said I. It was not confined to mankind, it was extended to all living beings.”⁴¹

Gandhi derived the basic concept of ahimsa from Buddhism and Jainism, which is the basis of his philosophy of life.

Kathiawad, the place where Gandhi lived his early days, is the heartland for Jainism. This land had produced number of Jaina thinkers, some of them were contemporary to him. The environment of his home in his early years inspired and inclined him towards Jainism. Though vaishnava by sect, he believed more in the Jain way of life. Dr R.N. Dandekar, a renowned scholar of vedic studies remarked:

“I sometimes think that if Gandhiji had not become involved in politics, he would have become a Jaina Muni. Incidentally, I may mention that in Europe and America, I

have met several educated persons who actually believed that Gandhiji was a Jaina”⁴²

The influence of Jainism can be seen in the political and economic ideas of Gandhi. The philosophy of *anashakti* (non-attachment) and *sarvodaya* (welfare of all), practiced by Gandhi was on account of the influence of the Jaina tradition. One finds that often, ahimsa assumes an extreme position, in the Jaina way of life. Gandhi never compromised on non-violence but followed a mere moderate path and made it clear that he chose to do so only to help all people practice it without much difficulty. He said:

“My non-violence is not merely kindness to all living creatures. The emphasis laid on the sacredness of subhuman life in Jainism is understandable. But that can never mean that one is to be kind to this life in preference to human life. While writing about the sacredness of such life, I take it that the sacredness of human life has been taken for granted. The former has been over-emphasized. And, while putting it into practice, the idea has undergone distortion.”⁴³

He applied non-violence to every sphere of his life. Gandhi’s observance of vows was a direct or indirect expression of Jainism as also his technique of *padyatra* which can be traced back to the Jaina tradition of walking by the monks. Gandhi was impacted by Jainism in the formulation of his epistemological theories. He called himself an *anaektavadi* and *syadvadi*. In his words:

“I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an *anekantavadi* or a *syadvadi*. But my *syadvada* is not the *syadvada* of the learned, it is peculiarly my own.”⁴⁴

His view of Jainism can be summed up in the following passage written by Gandhi:

“Jainism was, perhaps, the most logical of all faiths, and its most remarkable characteristic was its scrupulous regard for all things that lived.”⁴⁵

The teachings of Christianity had no less a role in moulding Gandhi's mind and heart in the formation of a new political ideology. His first acquaintance with Bible was during the days he was studying law in England, when a friend gave him the Holy Bible to read. 'The Old Testament' failed to inspire but 'The New Testament' especially 'The Sermon of Mount' made a deep impression on young Gandhi. He Says:

“But the New Testament produced a different impression, especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to my heart. I compared it with the Gita. The verses, 'But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man take away thy coat let him have thy cloke too,' delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind of Shamal Bhatt's 'For a bowl of water, give a goodly meal' etc. My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the Gita, The Light of Asia and the Sermon on the Mount.

That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly.”⁴⁶

C.F. Andrews, a good friend of Gandhi, observed the influence of Christianity in his life. In the words of Andrews:

“The prominent works having deep linkage with Christianity like The Sermon on the Mount, the New Testament and the Kingdom of God is within you greatly influenced Gandhi’s mind.”⁴⁷

This Sermon became a part and parcel of his philosophy and ideology. He was influenced by Christ’s example as a way of life. Gandhi himself admitted that the influence of Christianity in his life was so strong that “There was a time when I was wavering between Hinduism and Christianity.”⁴⁸ The sacrifice of Christ on the cross for the salvation of humanity had a very passionate impact on Gandhi. Gandhi’s concept of non-violence was nourished by the teachings of Christ. In his view, Jesus Christ represents the purest form of passive resistance. For him Jesus was the king of satyagrahis. Gandhi declared that:

“Christ died on the Cross with a crown of thorns on his head defying the might of a whole Empire. And if I raise resistances of a nonviolent character I simply and humbly follow in the footsteps of the great teachers...”⁴⁹

Western scholars like J.J. Doke and Horace Alexander claimed Christianity as the primary source of non-violence. In a reply to a question posed by J. J. Doke, Gandhi answered, “It was the New Testament which really awakened me to the

rightness and value of Passive Resistance.”⁵⁰ Gandhian philosophy of economics also bore the marks of Christian teachings. Non-possession, simplicity and renunciation were the practices directly taken from Christianity. In the political sphere, Gandhi once again had Christ as an ideal. Gandhi said :

“Jesus, in my humble opinion, was a prince among politicians. He did render unto Caesar that which was Caesar’s. He gave the devil his due. He ever shunned him and is reported never once to have yielded to his incantations.”⁵¹

The cardinal virtue of Gandhi’s philosophy i.e. truth, that had been practiced by him for his entire life, was also based on the principles of Christianity. He was closely associated with quite a few Christian friends who too, felt this quest for truth. This intimate connection with truth would not have been a reality, without a legitimate understanding of Christianity. On the death of Gandhi, Vincent Shaeen commented as:

“His death fulfilled his life, in the manner that has been the central characteristic of religious drama since the beginning of history. No less than Jesus of Nazareth, he died for all mankind. There could have been no better end for a life that was all devotion, all sacrifice, all abnegation and love.”⁵²

Etymologically Islam means peace and it is the religion of peace and brotherhood. Gandhi was familiar with Islam from his early days but two books namely Washington Irving’s *Life of Muhammad and his Successors* and the

chapter on prophet in Carlyle's *Hero's and Hero worship* moved young Gandhi considerably close to Islam and its Prophet. In his autobiography, he wrote: "These books raised Muhammad in my estimation."⁵³ Muhammad preached the teaching of Islam as oneness of God and brotherhood of mankind. Gandhi says:

"I do regard Islam to be a religion of peace in the same sense as Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism are. No doubt there are differences in degree, but the object of these religions is peace."⁵⁴

Gandhi held his regard for Islam deep in his heart and mind throughout his entire life. He declares that, "I certainly regard Islam as one of the inspired religions, and therefore the Holy Koran as an inspired book and Muhammad as one of the Prophets."⁵⁵ Gandhi was of the opinion that Islam encourages non-violence as the Quran placed non-violence as a higher virtue. He praised Muhammad as :

"I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and his own mission. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle."⁵⁶

Gandhi learnt much and tried to follow the way The Prophet fought evil. If one takes a look at the way Gandhi fought British imperialism, his mode of action was in tandem with that of The Prophet. This was reflected in his writing as:

“Let us also remember that the Prophet entered into treaty with those with whom he had little in common and who are described in scathing terms in the Koran. Non-cooperation, exodus, resistance and even violence were with the Prophet phases in the same battle of life wherein truth was everything.”⁵⁷

The teaching of Prophet Muhammad, Hazrat Ali and his grand children Hasan and Hussain influenced Gandhi. According to the C.F. Andrews :

“His profound admiration for the character of the Prophet Muhammad, as a man of faith and action, and also for his son in law Ali, as a man of tender love and suffering, has deeply affected him... Following the example set by the Prophet of Islam, Mahatma Gandhi has never for a moment separated the political from the spiritual, or failed to deal directly with the social evils which stood out before his eyes. Thus Prophet’s supreme, practical instinct as a reformer, combined with intense faith in God as a sole Creator and Director of the Universe, has been the source of constant strength and support to Mahatma Gandhi himself, in his own struggle.”⁵⁸

The impact of the environment, Gandhi grew up in had a formidable role in Gandhi’s contribution to the welfare of mankind. From childhood he got the

required milieu to become a man of substance. His family was a cultured one and it is noteworthy that everyone in the family contributed in shaping the tender mind of Gandhi. In England, while pursuing law as a student, Gandhi had a tremendous exposure to the political, social, economic, cultural and religious trends of the western world. Truth, non-violence, celibacy and tolerance, which Gandhi grasped from the Indian traditions, was reinforced with the boldness, activism, and energy of the western society. He further strengthened his convictions through a study of invaluable books like *Song Celestial* and *Light of Asia*. His political conscience was greatly enhanced and polished during that phase of his life. South Africa was the place which changed his life and under the influence of Ruskin, Tolstoy and Thoreau Gandhi performed his first satyagraha here. This land contributed in making him *The Mahatma*.

Throughout his life Gandhi, with an open heart and mind grasped all the good thoughts and philosophies that came into his path. As he was an ardent ceaseless experimenter of truth he critically assessed the views which he came across and after a keen assessment in the light of his knowledge and experience; he modified, changed and enriched those ideas previous to their application. Gandhi absorbed the goodness of all religions which greatly helped him in forming his idea of communal harmony and helped him never to falter as a man of morality and a firm believer in God. Gandhi treated Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam as ‘inspired religions’ and considered them to be complementary to each other. His universal religion gave rise to his humanism. It

is humanism that Gandhi lived by and that is the most significant factor of Gandhian philosophy.

Chapter III

Political Foundations of Gandhi's Philosophy

An exploration into the uniqueness of Gandhi's life and personality, his ideas, his innovative techniques of redressing political wrongs and injustice; both national and international is in itself deeply rewarding. Gandhi has been esteemed as one of those few whose thought concerns all humanity for all times to come.

Gandhi is known and remembered as the warrior of the freedom struggle of India, who waged and won the war of Indian independence against the yoke of British empire without the intervention of any violence. Without doubt his thoughts hold great relevance the world over but the comprehensiveness and the intense involvement his political ideas stand for have imparted a new meaning to political endeavours. The political manoeuvres Gandhi adopted were supported by religious and ethical ideas with an intention to weed out discrimination and bring about an over all emancipation of all sections of the society. For him politics deprived of religion is more like a death trap as it exterminates the soul, and without a moral basis, politics would never have the positive impact that Gandhi was determined to have. Gandhi preferred to call himself a socialist, and though his socialism did eliminate elements such as class conflict, but instead of the use of any violence it mainly comprised of peace and non-violence. He intended to root out all such evils as caste-system, untouchability and exploitation of poor.

His political philosophy in itself is perhaps the most original contribution to the world that forged the philosophical underpinnings of the nationalist movements of a number of countries of the world and benefited the masses in their struggle for justice. The Gandhi's political philosophy is wrought with the intention of putting it to the use of the country's requirements and finds its relevance in the results it yielded in those situations. It had no resemblance to over systematic approaches that are often too logical to be applicable.

The political philosophy of Gandhi is often understood as the convergence of non-violence, satyagraha and swaraj. Non-violence or ahimsa means abstaining from the use of any physical force to achieve one's goal. It is a philosophy, a principle, and a practice. As an ethical philosophy, it upholds the view that moral behavior excludes the use of violence; as a political philosophy it maintains that violence is self-perpetuating and can never provide a means to a securely peaceful end.

Swaraj is the prime pillar of Gandhi's political philosophy. It does not mean complete freedom from restraint, which the english word, independence, often conveys. The concept of swaraj is the togetherness of members of a state and is closely related to the notion of self-rule as applied to the ethical and moral ontogeny of every human being. The development of policy was regarded as a reflection of moral maturity and self-development of an elite or a majority of individuals. But for Gandhi, swaraj meant a much larger accomplishment than

mere freedom from the British rule. It meant freedom from all evils prevalent in the country that are oppressive to its people.

Satyagraha is one of the most original thoughts of Gandhi. Satyagraha is an ideological concept pertaining to moral force or soul-force or truth-force or love-force or non-violent force which according to Gandhi should be used by the individual to fight against social, economic and political evils of the society.

Gandhi was a *karamayogin*, a practical idealist, and his philosophy has grown out of his own experience with truth. He is a philosophical anarchist because he believes that this end can be realised only in the classless and stateless democracy of autonomous village communities based on truth and non-violence.

In this chapter we will discuss in some detail the concepts of non-violence, satyagraha and swaraj that go into the making and preponderance of Gandhi's political ideas.

(a) Non-violence

“My life is dedicated to service of India through the religion of non-violence.”

(*Young India*, 11.8.1920, CWMG, Vol.21, P.136)

‘Non-violence’ is constructed by the two words where the former, ‘non’ is a prefix to the word ‘violence’ and thus stands to state the opposite of the latter. Non-violence is a form of peaceful resistance, action or technique and therefore should not be considered as inaction. For many non-violence remains mysterious, controversial or both.

Non-violence or ahimsa means abstaining from the use of physical force to achieve one's purpose. It is a philosophy, a principle, and a practice. As an ethical philosophy, it upholds the view that moral behaviour excludes the use of violence; as a political philosophy it maintains that violence is self-perpetuating and can never provide a means to secure a peaceful end. As a principle, it supports the pacifist position that war and killing are never justifiable. Non-violence is the life stance of one who refuses to use violent methods to achieve his or her ends, no matter how laudable those ends might be. It goes beyond merely avoiding directly killing or injuring to acquiring a generalised attitude of benevolence, love and respect towards all. It includes the duty to oppose evil without trying to coerce or deceive the evil-doer. Many excellent, unique and worthy concepts of non-violence have developed from time-to-time, both in the east and the west. Most of the concepts developed in the east pertain to India. The importance of ahimsa as a supreme human value has been explained by Indian seers and thinkers.

Whenever one thinks or talks about non-violence as an instrument to fight against oppression and subjugation, one undoubtedly has a few personalities in mind, and Gandhi cannot be superseded. Gandhi was well-known for his non-violent struggles against imperialism to gain political freedom. His concept of peace and non-violence was therefore a theory of revolutionary social change and development. Non-violence was a basic imperative in Gandhi's entire life, both within the smaller circle of his ashrams and in the wider political arena. According to Gandhi, since non-violence is an expression of love, it follows that it is far more

positive than mere abstinence from physical violence. Every non-violent act must be characterized by a total absence of hatred or any other form of ill-will. The adversary must be treated with goodwill, respect and sympathy. Non-violent action is a technique in which people can address conflict, including threats to their security, without the use of violence. It is not an attempt to ignore or to avoid conflict but to bring social and political change through peaceful means.

The history of the independence of India is marked by a turning point in the Indian freedom struggle after Gandhi's return from South Africa in January 1915. When he went to South Africa and began his stormy career as a political activist, he began to use the expression 'passive resistance' while fighting for the cause of blacks, especially Indians. After coming back to India, however, Gandhi's attention was drawn to the term ahimsa, and he made it obligatory on the inmates of his ashram, the vow of the non-violence, along with truth, celibacy, and non-possession. For Gandhi, non-violence became an ideal which eschewed violence not only in action but also in thoughts and words.

There are many personalities in Indian and world history that advocated, preached and practiced non-violence but Gandhi's practice of non-violence influenced the bourgeoisie of the country in most efficient ways. Even while developing non-violence as a political ideology, Gandhi demanded that non-violence has to be a way of life and not merely a stated policy. His doctrine of non-violence mobilised the masses irrespective of their caste, creed, language and religion and ultimately led the country to independence. Many see Gandhi as the

embodiment of politically effective pacifism. Gandhi's design to fight the imperial power through non-violence systematically progressed through three stages. The first stage consisted of demonstrations, vigils, pickets, protest meetings, and street theater. Non-cooperation, is the second stage, which being the most common form of non-violent action, includes strikes, boycotts, tax resistance and boycotts of legislative bodies and elections and civil disobedience and are largely political in nature. Non-violent intervention, the third category, is divided into disruptive and creative methods. Disruptive methods include non-violent blockades, fasting, imprisonment, while creative methods involve establishing alternative political, economic, and social institutions such as ethical investment groups, alternative schools, and even parallel governments. After successfully applying the model of passive resistance in South Africa where racism was even more intense than in India, Gandhi effectively utilised it in fighting against the British raj in India, right from his first agitation, which he called satyagraha, against the exploitation of the poor peasants, the indigo growers in Champaran, to his last major agitation, i.e. Quit India Movement.

It is true that Gandhi is not the pioneer of the doctrine of non-violence. The concept and practice of non-violence has its roots in the remote past. Gandhi studied Indian spiritualism and the philosophy of self-realisation. He was also influenced by the thinkers of Europe and Asia who inculcated the idea of non-violence in their philosophy. The Harappan civilization, Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilization had an orientation which was predominantly non-

violent in nature. All the major religions preached the practice of non-violence. Hinduism too teaches and practices non-violence and pacifism, the roots of which are traced back to the Upanishadic era. The people during the period of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* truly imbibed ahimsa in their life. Both Buddhism and Jainism too preached the practice of ahimsa in everyday life. In the Christian religious teaching Gandhi found a true example of self suffering for the sake of truth and non-violence. Gita, which was the daily consulting dictionary to Gandhi also contributed to his understanding of non-violence while the Quran and the basic teachings of Muhammad made its own unique contribution. He was under the influence of the major religions of the world that Gandhi evolved a comprehensive idea of non-violence which was reflected in his article:

“Non-violence is therefore in its active form, goodwill towards all life. It is pure Love. I read it in Hindu scriptures, in the Bible, in the Koran”¹

Gandhi was influenced not only by western thinkers but by the Indian heritage also. It is said that Gandhi's thought and philosophy, especially regarding non-violence was influenced by the three great personalities of the world, Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau. Gandhi made an extensive study of the works of Tolstoy, especially his book, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. Tolstoy developed the concept of Non-violence for the first time in a systematic manner. After reading it, Gandhi became a devoted follower of Tolstoy.

The principle of non-violence was the breath of his life. He lived, practiced and preached non-violence in each sphere of his life. Gandhi wrote that, “For me non-violence is not a mere philosophical principle. It is the rule and breath of my life.”² Again he said that, “Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed.”³ Further, Gandhi’s essence of non-violence is that:

“Non-violence is a power which can be wielded equally by all children, young men and women or grown up people, provided they have a living faith in the God of love for all mankind. When non-violence is accepted as the law of life it must pervade the whole being and not applied to isolated acts.”⁴

He firmly believed that structural purification alone was not enough as self-purification was most essential. In the Gandhian conception, non-violence is about the use of power in a way that is both highly effective and highly ethical. Gandhi mentioned in *Harijan* that:

“Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man. Destruction is not the law of the humans. Man lives freely by his readiness to die, if need be, at the hands of his brother, never by killing him. Every murder or other injury, no matter for what cause, committed or inflicted on another is a crime against humanity.”⁵

Non-violence is a vision and a way of life. Like Plato, Gandhi also advocated that the universe is governed by non-violence and love, for life persists in the midst of destruction, but man does not live by destruction. To him: “Mutual love enables nature to persist. Man does not live by destruction. Self-love compels regard for others.”⁶ Because where there is love, there is life; hatred leads to destruction.⁷ Thus non-violence is an all pervasive eternal principle applicable to every walk of life without any exception. This is the reason of Gandhi’s insistence that, “when non-violence is accepted as the law of life, it must pervade the whole being and not applied to isolated acts.”⁸ Non-violence was essentially a negative concept but Gandhi changed it to a positive concept of loving life as such. Gandhi himself admits very frankly by saying, “There is no such thing as Gandhism....I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine.”⁹ Again, Gandhi pointed out:

“I have nothing new to teach the world, truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scale as I could. In doing so I have sometimes erred and learnt by my errors. Life and its problems have thus become to me so many experiments in the practice of truth and non-violence.”¹⁰

So, the concept of non-violence is the result of his vast and varied experiences in his life.

The twin cardinal principles of Gandhi’s thought are truth and non-violence which are mutually inter-woven. Truth leads to non-violence and ultimately leads

to satyagraha. For Gandhi, truth, non-violence and God are symbiotic in nature synonymous, for the force behind his philosophy of non-violence is truth and God. One can feel truth only if he has God in his heart and ultimately this leads to practicing and acting on the path of non-violence. Gandhi told the worker's at Bogra that:

“Ahimsa is my God, and Truth is my God. When I look for ahimsa, Truth says, ‘Find it out through me’. When I look for Truth, ahimsa says, ‘Find it out through me’.”¹¹

It is practice oriented for it is a movement of social revolution, change and development and the task of non-violence is not to maintain the status-quo but to weed out the elements of discontent from its very roots. Gandhi tells us that the person practicing non-violence has special characteristics. He was of the view that the weapon of non-violence was to be used in different ways in keeping with the situation and requirements. The practitioners of non-violence should have no intention to inflict harm and should shun the minimum possibility of violence in thought, word or deed towards the enemy. The essence of violence lies in the violent intention behind a thought, word or action; an intention to harm the opponent. In this regard, intention becomes the central element. Gandhi states: “Before the throne of the Almighty, man will be judged not by his acts but by his intentions. For God alone reads our hearts.”¹² Gandhi's concept of non-violence was that it was the supreme law of God, as he stated in his article, ‘How to cultivate ahimsa’ that “ahimsa is the supreme law of *dharma*. The other is: there is

no other Law or *Dharma* than truth.”¹³ Ajay Shanker Rai wrote in his book *Gandhian Satyagraha* that non-violence in its highest form, is called absolute ahimsa, which means perfect freedom from violence and an unstoppable love for all. This state of complete non-violence, the stage when all violence, in whatever form is eschewed, is in fact a perfect state of non-violence. It is attained only when mind, body and speech are in perfect coordination. It is in itself a power the absolute power the real attribute of God.¹⁴

At another place Gandhi emphasises that non-violence should be a necessary component in the activities of everyday life. He said that a non-violent person should wash every type of ill-will from the heart completely. His heart should be pure. Gandhi writes:

“Those who are sincere in their desire to follow ahimsa will examine their own hearts and look at their neighbours. If one finds ill will and hatred in one’s heart, one may know that one has not climbed the first step towards the goal of ahimsa. If a person does not observe ahimsa in his relations with his neighbours and his associates, he is thousands of miles away from ahimsa.”¹⁵

One of the main attributes of Gandhi’s idea of non-violence was his ability to distinguish between positive and negative non-violence, to follow non-violence means to reject all physical violence in principle and concentrate on maintaining one’s own integrity, rejection of coercion and a belief in active goodwill and

reconciliation and a resistance to evil with peaceful means. Once again Gandhi points out the positive dimension of non-violence by equating his concept of non-violence with the virtue of compassion when he writes that:

“Where there is no compassion there is no ahimsa. The test of ahimsa is compassion. The concrete form of ahimsa is compassion, hence it is said that there is as much ahimsa as there is compassion. If I refrain from beating up a man who comes to attack me, it may or may not be ahimsa. If I refrain from hitting him out of fear, it is not ahimsa. If I abstain from hitting him out of compassion and with full knowledge, it is ahimsa.”¹⁶

In the reply to Lala Lajpat Rai on ahimsa, Gandhi said that:

“In its negative form, it means not injuring any living being, whether by body or mind. I may therefore hurt the person of any wrong doer, or bear any ill will to him and so cause him mental suffering.”¹⁷

He then explains the positive form by mentioning that, “In its positive form, ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of ahimsa, I must love my enemy.”¹⁸ He concluded by saying that, “Ahimsa truly understood, is in my humble opinion, a panacea for all evil mundane and extra mundane.”¹⁹ True non-violence must be non-violence in word, deed and thought.²⁰ Gandhi's commitment to non-violence in thought, word and deed was so intense that he explained:

“I personally would wait, if need be, for ages rather than seek to attain the freedom of my country through bloody means.”²¹

Thus Gandhi equates non-violence with patience, tolerance, self restraint, self-sacrifice and moral duty and emphasises to observe it in the all activities of daily life. A true votary of non-violence should not harbour ill-will against anybody and he should not use such language which is bound to injure the feelings and sentiments of anybody even of the opponent. Gandhi further mentioned that:

“Indeed the acid test of non-violence is that one thinks, speaks and acts non-violently, even when there is the gravest provocation to be violent. There is no merit in being non-violent to the good and the gentle. Non-violence is the mightiest force in the world capable of resisting the greatest imaginable temptation....mere non-violent action without the thought behind it is of little value. It can never be infectious. It is almost like a whited sepulchre. Thought is the power and life behind it.”²²

In Gandhi's view, non-violence is the summit of courage and fearlessness. Gandhi wrote in *Young India* that, “I do believe that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence I would advise violence.”²³

He advocated violence in place of cowardice as it is better to be violent than to withhold oneself out of cowardice. He further stated that:

“Hence also do I advocate training in arms for those who believe in the method of violence. I would rather have

India resort to arms in order to defend her honor than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonor.”²⁴

Ajay Shanker Rai mentioned that when a coward escapes from any danger or fear of suffering being inflicted his action is worse than an act of violence. The coward has no faith in God and offends against truth when he feigns non-violence whereas a person given to violence is at least has the courage to be true to his feelings. So, Gandhi strongly advises violence in place of cowardice, because it is better to be violent if there is violence in our heart than to pretend otherwise. At another place Gandhi explained that:

“When a women is assaulted, she may not stop to think in terms of himsa or ahimsa. Her primary duty is self-protection. She is at liberty to employ every method or means that come to her mind in order to defend her honour. God has given her nails, and teeth. She must use them with all her strength and if need be, die in the effort.”²⁶

In fact fearlessness is one of the most important prerequisites for the observance and pursuit of the principle of non-violence. Without a complete adherence to the principle of fearlessness the growth of truth, love and non-violence is quite impossible. Gandhi writes:

“Violence does not mean emancipation from fear, but discovering the means of combating the cause of fear. Non-violence, on the other hand, has no cause for fear.

The votary of non-violence has to cultivate the capacity for sacrifice of the highest type in order to be free from fear. He racks not if he should lose his land, his wealth, his life. He who has not overcome all fear cannot practice ahimsa to perfection. The votary of ahimsa has only one fear, that is of God.”²⁷

Thus fear is the root cause of destruction, exploitation, injustice and violence. If man wants to achieve progress of the whole of mankind, then he must shake off all fears. Thus non-violence lies in fearlessness and fearlessness lies in detachment, selflessness and desirelessness. Violence arises out of selfish desires and attachments. Therefore, the votary of non-violence must detach himself from desiring worldly things if he wants to achieve a fearless life. Gandhi further said that fear is a lack of faith and trust in God. Gandhi mentioned that:

“Fear of man argues want of faith in God. Only he trusts to his physical strength who has no faith or very little faith in God’s Omnipresence...The first, viz., reliance on God and shaking off the fear of man is the way of non-violence and the best way. The second, viz., reliance on one’s physical might is the way of violence.”²⁸

According to the traditional concept, non-violence means non-killing or non-injury or non-harming of any living beings including the lower animals or insects. Therefore, this concept of non-violence is negative in character. But Gandhi developed the concept of non-violence by giving an unlimited positive meaning to it. He included many positive and ethical elements like love, charity,

humanism, dignity of labour, dignity of mankind, pursuits of truth, moral life, moral religion, moral economics, moral politics observance of spiritual unity and above all establishment of an evil-free society into the gamut of his definitions and interpretations of non-violence. At a place Gandhi reveals:

“.....to me it (ahimsa) has a world of meaning and takes me into realms much higher infinitely higher than the realm to which I would go, if I merely understood by ahimsa non-killing.”²⁹

At another place Gandhi makes a clear distinction between negative and positive meanings of non-violence and gives them an ethical aspect. He writes:

“In its negative form, it means not injuring any living being, whether by body or mind. I may not therefore hurt any ill-will to him and so cause him mental suffering caused to the wrong-doer by natural acts of mine which do not proceed from ill-will....Ahimsa requires deliberate self-suffering not a deliberate injuring of the supposed wrong-doer.”³⁰

A person like Mahatma Gandhi went to the extent of saying:

“The *Rishis*, who discovered the law of non-violence in the midst of violence, were greater geniuses than Newton. They were themselves greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known the use of arms, they realised their uselessness and taught a weary world that its salvation lay not through violence but through non-violence.”³¹

In Gandhi's view peace is thus not a static concept but a dynamic, positive entity. It is an active force. To him the new society is peaceful and the purpose of peace activities is to move towards it. Its scope is comprehensive. In his own words:

“Ahimsa is a comprehensive principle. We are helpless mortals caught in the conflagration of himsa. The saying that life lives on life has a deep meaning in it... A votary of Ahimsa therefore remains true to this faith if the spring of all his actions is compassion, if he shuns to the best of his ability the destruction of the tiniest creature, tries to save it, and thus incessantly strives to be free from the deadly coil of himsa. He will be constantly growing in self-restraint and compassion, but he never becomes entirely free from himsa.”³²

Gandhi advocated that the principle of non-violence can also be achieved and practiced proficiently by adopting social changes in the society. Gandhi believed that brahmacharya is an important part of ahimsa. He felt that only a person who follows brahmacharya could truly practice ahimsa or universal love. At one place Gandhi mentioned that:

“We find that fulfillment of ahimsa is impossible without perfect brahmacharya. Ahimsa means universal love. If a man gives his love to one woman, or even a woman to one man, what is there left for all the world besides? It simply means, we two first and the devil take all the rest of them.”³³

The principle of removal of untouchability is another important moral principle based on truth, love and non-violence. Untouchability and non-violence or love stand to contradict each other. The practice of untouchability creates the sense of discrimination between men which is nothing but a source of tension, conflict and an act of violence. Therefore, Gandhi emphasised on the abolition of the violent institution of untouchability. Gandhi mentioned that:

“I believe that if untouchability is really rooted out, it not only purge Hinduism of a terrible blot but its repercussions will be world-wide. My fight against untouchability is a fight against the impure of humanity.”³⁴

No real progress is possible in the society unless and until the practice of untouchability is rooted out and millions of so-called untouchables are made free from virtual slavery and serfdom.³⁵ As the principle of non-violence means universal love and compassion for the whole world, the removal of untouchability is a natural corollary of it. So, Gandhi also connected ahimsa with compassion. He explained the difference between ahimsa and compassion and also the relation between ahimsa and compassion. Gandhi said:

“There is as much difference between ahimsa and compassion as there is between gold and the shape given to it, between root and the tree which sprouts from it. Where there is no compassion, there is no ahimsa. The test of ahimsa is compassion. The concrete form of ahimsa is compassion. Hence it is said that there is as

much ahimsa as there is compassion. If I refrain from beating up a man who comes to attack me, it may or may not be ahimsa. If I refrain from hitting him out of fear it is not ahimsa. If I abstain from hitting him out of compassion and with full knowledge, it is ahimsa.”³⁶

So, through compassion Gandhi makes clear that, “Removal of untouchability means love for and service of the whole world, and thus merges into ahimsa.”³⁷ In today’s scenario where the world is unipolar in nature, Gandhi’s teaching of non-violence are more relevant than ever before. Countries live for their values and passion but at the core of their existence lies our innate desire to live a peaceful life. History can attest to the fact that most conflicts have been as a result of a stubborn approach by our leaders and arrogance towards each others. This fact was mentioned by Gandhi in *Harijan* that: “Enmity vanishes before ahimsa, is a great aphorism. It means that the greatest enmity requires an equal measure of ahimsa for its abatement.”³⁸

His aim was not only ending wars or violence but at rooting out all violence and exploitation from the society at all levels. It is a movement for total and fundamental social change. Gandhi reveals this, in his address to the INA officers in 1946. He said that:

“You must not be carried off your feet by unthinking, popular applause. The essential part of your message to the country is not how to wield the sword but how to cease to be afraid of it.”³⁹

Non-violence according to Gandhi is not an antidote to violence but an alternate force for social change. Non-violence in the present world cannot be left to governments alone. Peace starts with people, it flows from the hearts of committed women and men. Communities, families and individuals all have a critical role to play in defeating violence and creating a culture of peace. Besides the relevance of non-violence in the struggle against the dictatorships, growing recognition that the destructiveness of modern warfare makes successful military defense against attacks a doubtful proposition, has led many countries to explore the application of non-violent struggle to national defence. Perhaps, the primary lesson everyone needs to learn from Gandhi is to choose truth and non-violence over any form of violence, every day for the rest of their lives. Gandhi's path to non-violence, the way of the cross, is an invitation to resist the nuclear arms race at its very roots. Gandhi evolved a systematic approach to the concept of non-violence.

Gandhi won over the hearts of millions without ever reigning power over anyone, simply with the strength of non-violence. Most of the people tended to focus on Gandhi's non-violence, seeing it as an alternative to violence. But to some extent this was misleading. It was a way of being in the world; a way of living. He believed there was a non-violent way of thinking, feeling and judging, an idea that dates back to Plato, Buddha and Mahavira, but has been reinforced by modernity for it is time to raise the collective consciousness pertaining to peace. This can be achieved through constructive dialogues, respecting one another,

understanding and trusting each other, accepting new people in society, sharing love and natural resources, and building bridges with various faiths, communities and countries.

Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence is not new, but it is unique for he translated the idea into a more systematic and practical implementation. One of the reasons for the success of Gandhian theory of non-violence is that Gandhi followed it to its very core and with uncompromising determination in his political and social life. He experimented with and practiced the doctrine of non-violence in almost every sphere of his life. To him:

“For the way of non-violence and truth is sharp as the razor's edge. Its practice is more than our daily food. Rightly taken, food sustains the body; rightly practiced non-violence sustains the soul. The body food we can only take in measured quantities and at stated intervals; non-violence, which is the spiritual food, we have to take in continually.”⁴⁰

Gandhi's foremost view about non-violence is that truth can only be achieved through non-violence. It is a way of life rather than an act. Gandhi clearly distinguished between non-violence and violence in holding that the use of *himsa* or *ahimsa* is relative to the condition, and peculiar to the situation under consideration. Non-violence does not mean submission to the evil-doer. He expressed his views on negative and positive non-violence with clarity. In its positive and active aspect, non-violence is an expression of benevolence and love.

The negative aspect of non-violence consists of refraining from any action that may be born out of anger and from actions that have a selfish motive or are instigated by the desire to watch people suffering. This negative non-violence, means avoiding injury to anybody in thoughts, words or deeds.

Gandhi was exposed to a great number of ideas that inspired him. While these ideas did not originate with him, his unique way of combining them can be said to be fairly original. Gandhi's non-violence had three main elements: first is self-improvement (the effort to make one self a better person), second is constructive programme (concrete work to create a new social order), and the last being the campaigns of resistance against evils that blocked the way to progress. The notion of power placed within a non-violent scheme is essentially different: rather than seeing power as a possession it is considered to be a dynamic social relation. Sometimes non-violent action is improvised in the heat of a crisis while at other times it is carefully planned before hand. Certain dynamics remain the same in either case. Although Gandhi was a man of faith, he did not found a religion, nor did he create any specific dogma for his followers. Gandhi constantly tried to bring about a social change through non-violent means, not by exerting external pressure but by encouraging a change from within an individual.

Gandhi often said that while non-violence was superior to violence, violence, in turn, was superior to passivity in the phase of injustice. Gandhi encouraged the message of non-violence to all people for according to him the salvation of mankind lies only in the practice of non-violence. He gave non-

violence an aptly extended meaning and application and sought the power of non-violence at a public level as no one else in modern times has done. According to Gandhi,

“There is no such thing as defeat in non-violence. The end of violence is surest defeat, and the ultimate end of non-violence is surest victory if such a term may be use of non-violence. In reality where there is no sense of defeat, there is no sense of victory.”⁴¹

Non-violence for Gandhi is the law of human race and is greater and superior to any other force.

(b) Satyagraha

“The fight of satyagraha is for the strong in spirit, not for the doubter or the timid. Satyagraha teaches us the art of living as well as dying.”

(*Harijan*, 7.4.1946, CWMG, Vol. 90, P.81)

The Transvaal Government Gazette submitted a draft of an ordinance to the state legislature in August, 1906. According to this proposed ordinance, it was necessary for all Indian men, women and children above eight years of age to register their names with the authorities, to submit to finger printing and receive a certificate which they were required to keep with them at all times and noncompliance to any of this would lead to loosing the right of residence. They would further be liable to imprisonment, fine or even be deported from Transvaal.

Gandhi called it the 'Black Act'. This was the first representation of the campaign of non-violence as a corporate action. A large number of Indians boycotted the bill. When it became a law a large number of Indians did not accept permits contemplated under its rules. Several Indians were imprisoned and Gandhi was among them. This movement led by Gandhi was a passive resistance. Gandhi did not like the use of the word passive resistance because of the connotations it carried pointing it out to be a weapon of the weak. The very word 'passive' was a misnomer because for Gandhi the movement he led was not only active but a positive one also. Hence he was searching for an appropriate and if possible an Indian term. For this he declared a prize through his paper the Indian Opinion, for anyone who could offer a cogent terminology to this form of resistance. Maganlal Gandhi, a nephew of Mahatma Gandhi suggested the term *Sadagraha* which meant firmness in a good cause. Gandhi stated that:

“I liked the word, but it did not fully represent the whole idea I wished it to connote. I therefore corrected it to ‘Satyagraha’. Truth (satya) implies love, and firmness (agraha) engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement ‘Satyagraha’, that is to say the Force which is born of truth and love or non-violence...”¹

The principle of satyagraha was not originally conceived by Mahatma Gandhi, though he coined the term. He himself observed that:

“I never claimed to have originated any philosophy....I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal principles of truth and non-violence to our daily life and problems.”²

Quite literally satyagraha means, “holding onto Truth.”³ The term satyagraha is sanskrit in origin and is a combination of two words- *satya* and *agraha*. The word *satya* (truth) is derived from *sat* which means being; nothing is or exists in reality except truth. And *agraha* means firmness or adherence or insistence or holding on to, thus the compound word satyagraha implies firmness in truth or adherence to truth or insistence on truth or holding on to truth. Satyagraha is pure soul-force. Truth is the very substance of the soul. Satyagraha may also be sometimes called as truth-force but it is more appropriate to call this force as satyagraha. Gandhi differentiates between the two forces i.e. body force and soul force. Of these two, the body force implies violence while soul-force connotes non-violence and satyagraha. Soul-force can be used even by one who is weak in body. The true meaning of satyagraha, one may find in most conditions is, that anyone who wants to engage in satyagraha should show a special regard for truth and should depend on truth alone. Thus satyagraha is the insistence on truth, and the force derivable from such insistence.

For Gandhi soul-force was a better alternative than rationality or violence which had limited use in struggles against injustice. Gandhi believed that a new method was required, a method that had the potential to activate the nobleness of the soul with an appeal to one's rationality as well as one's emotions. It should be

capable of creating an environment free of hatred and reposing trust in each other. Gandhi was convinced that only satyagraha met all these requirements.

After the successful implementation of passive resistance in South Africa, Gandhi came to India in 1915. Satyagraha was his first public program that he performed in his homeland. Satyagraha was to be the doctrine of Gandhi which would make the country free, and Gandhi, the father of nation. The uniqueness of the programme lay in the fact that it was used as a technique for mass mobilization and political protest against the injustice of the British government. Gandhi preached and practiced the glory of moral power i.e. satyagraha and believed, that a single individual, by using his soul-force, is capable of bringing about immense transformation within the millions with whom he lives. Gandhi's first satyagraha in India was Champaran satyagraha, where he led a successful satyagraha campaign fighting for the rights of the indigo planters. Champaran was regarded as a turning point in India's freedom struggle. For the first time with peaceful means, Gandhi challenged the Britishers against the exploitation of his fellow Indians. Simultaneously, he ignited the latent power of the suffering masses by invoking their spirit of dignity and self-reliance. The second satyagraha was taken up by Gandhi in 1918, when he fought for the rights of the textile mill workers of Ahmadabad, by introducing a method of fasting for the first time. The mill owners agreed to the demands of the workers after considerable arbitration and negotiations. Later, the same year Gandhi led a satyagraha for the peasants of Kheda and successfully implemented it.

Although Gandhi, sometimes used the words satyagraha and passive resistance as synonyms, he regarded the two as fundamentally distinct in nature. The primary distinction being, that satyagraha is the belief in one's strength, a belief which grows each day, and the more it grows the more effective it becomes. Passive resistance on the other hand is passive and may often give rise to the feelings of weakness and helplessness in people. Secondly, there is no scope of love in passive resistance, just as there is no place for hatred in satyagraha. Also physical or brute force has no place within satyagraha, but the same may not be applicable to passive resistance. Lastly, in attaining or practicing satyagraha there is no desire to injure the opponent, while in passive resistance the motive of harassing the opponent is present. Passive resistance is the weapon of the weak while satyagraha is the weapon of the brave. Passive resistance may cater to ill-will and violence against the opponent. It does not restrict an expression of violence while satyagraha is a way of continually correcting the drawbacks of the opponent through love. It never indulges in violence in any form. Therefore:

“Passive resistance is different from satyagraha in three essentials: satyagraha is a weapon of the strong, it admits of non-violence under any circumstance and it ever insists upon truth.”⁵

Thus we understand satyagraha to be an ideological concept pertaining to moral force or spiritual force or soul force or truth force or love force or non-

violent force which according to Gandhi should be used by the individual to fight against social, economic and political evils of the society. Gandhi points out:

“A satyagrahi will always try to overcome evil by good,
anger by love, untruth by truth, himsa by ahimsa.”⁶

Satyagraha is actually a way to approach conflict and resolve it non-violently, on many levels of human interactions while passive resistance may take recourse to resolving issues violently.

The main aim of passive resistance is to embarrass and harass the adversary and eventually to defeat him while in satyagraha the accent is on not causing the slightest harassment or injury to the opponents. Satyagraha is befitting to all contexts and situations for it is rudimentary to philosophical, ethical, psychological assumptions concerning the human situation. Satyagraha is thus a holistic doctrine or a way of life aiming at the creation or restoration of justice through non-violent means.

Thus we notice that satyagraha and passive resistance are both methods of dealing with aggression in order to settle conflicts and bring about congenial social and political changes. But in the mode of operation the two differ fundamentally and should not be confused with the other. While on the one hand there is no scope for love in passive resistance, on the other not only has hatred no place in satyagraha but is a breach of its ruling principle. While in passive resistance there is a scope for the use of arms, in satyagraha physical force is completely forbidden. Passive resistance is often looked upon as a preparation for the use of

force while satyagraha is a constant and conscious denial of any such use. While passive resistance can be operated along with the use of arms, satyagraha and brute force, being each a negation of the other can never coexist. Gandhi said:

“The passive resistance is a negative concept and has nothing to do with the active principle of love on which satyagraha is based.”⁷

Gandhi's preference for the term satyagraha over passive resistance is also on account of a distinction. The word 'passive' hints at weakness because it does not imply an 'active' resistance against evil. The second difference being that love is the essential ingredient of satyagraha whereas it is missing in passive resistance. The third point is physical force, though not commonly used, is not completely ruled out in passive resistance whereas satyagraha is committed to non-violence alone.

Gandhi felt that it would be wrong to treat passive resistance and satyagraha as totally overlapping for the rudiments of the national movement and the ideology of the common man of this country were required to be devoid of any violent thoughts or actions. This fact is mentioned in his writing as:

“We are only concerned to note the distinction between passive resistance and satyagraha, and we have seen that there is a great and fundamental difference between the two. If without understanding this, those who call themselves either passive resisters or satyagrahis believe both to be one and the same thing, there would be injustice to both, leading to untoward consequences.”⁸

The doctrine of satyagraha is not new for it is found in Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Gita, Quran, Bible and almost all the religious books. Holding up against his father's brutality Prahalad was perhaps the first satyagrahi of this world. Rama, Krishna, Socrates, Christ and Muhammad and other religious saints and seers practiced satyagraha in their own manner. Gandhi was unaware of satyagraha when he started passive resistance in South Africa. Gandhi himself said that:

“The principle called satyagraha came into being, before that name was invented. When it was born, I myself could not say what it was.”⁹

Satyagraha was the cumulative outcome of his experiences in life from his birth to his tragic end. His experiences as traditional hindu, his immense capacity to absorb the main teachings of different religion to give his thought a broader spectrum and finally his craving for acquiring knowledge through western thinkers and philosophers went into the making of his mind. He holds the credit for having brought together and assimilated such a varied stretch of inputs in his notion of satyagraha and evolving it as the most potent force to reclaim the freedom of India. The subtle concepts and fine techniques of satyagraha were completely Gandhian in character and were soon disseminated over the world and held in great esteem.

Even as Gandhi was a small child his mother and nurse taught him to stand for the cause of truth fearlessly. Gandhi understood the importance of truth and

alongside the import of winning over an opponent through love and compassion even as he was still in school. Gandhi mentions in his autobiography that at that early stage he still had not learnt about ahimsa, but had already realised that truth was the substance of all morality. A Gujarati poem written by Shamal Bhatt taught him the principle of returning good for evil. It was his wife Kasturba who made him realise the practical applicability of the principle of satyagraha.

The ethical astuteness of Gandhi's satyagraha was due to his understanding of the hindu philosophy, as well as the ancient writings related to hinduism that had a profound effect on him. Non-violence and truth, the twin roots, and the goal of satyagraha have been mentioned in the Vedas. In Rigveda and Yajurveda one find discussions of love and non-violence. Rigveda emphasises upon *yayam* and *aham* where the former stands for the greatest good of all or sarvodaya. The doctrine of truth and non-violence are clearly stated in the Upanishads too where the seeds of satyagraha; truth and non-violence are present in their rudimentary form. The doctrine of non-violence to be practiced not only on human beings but on all other beings first finds expression in a mystical passage in Chandogya Upanishad.¹⁰

Satya, the core of Gandhi's philosophy had vedic roots. Though, the vedic concept of truth was explained by the word '*ṛta*', which was all pervading and binding, the term ceased to exist in the later period and its meaning was conveyed through the term '*satya*'. It was this word which formed the essence of Gandhi's idea of satyagraha.

The tradition of truth and non-violence was further developed in the epic *Ramayana*, which stood to be the guide of several Indians for centuries. Both *Ramayanas* of Valmiki and Tulsi beautifully present the principle of truth and non-violence. Valmiki painted Ram as God or Truth and established, Truth is God.

Gandhi later accepted the concept and practice of *anasakti* and made it the quality of a satyagrahi. A *niskamkarma yogi* is a true satyagrahi because of his insistence on truth and non-violence, which was later termed satyagraha. The idea of duty in Gita contributed in the formation of the Gandhian idea of civil resistance. The key to Gandhi's theory and practice is that no sacrifice is enough for the upkeep of rightness. Thus the votary of truth and non-violence, called *sthitaprajna* in the Gita is called satyagrahi by Gandhi.

Besides hinduism, Gandhi was also greatly influenced by the Jain traditions in his early life which he spent in Gujarat. Raichand, a pious Jain jeweler also influenced him spiritually when he was young. Gandhi wrote:

“By birth, I am vaishnavite and was taught Ahimsa in my childhood. I have derived much religious benefit from jain religious works as I have from scriptures of the other great faiths of the world. They are a part of my life.”¹¹

Budhism and Jainism which were considered as a part of hinduism, taught Gandhi to adopt the principle of ahimsa. But for the induction of ahimsa, Gandhi's satyagraha would have never been as effective. The doctrine of ahimsa, in the Jaina way, is in fact on extreme application of a great sovereign truth. Gandhi's

opinion that a satyagrahi should not destroy even the smallest insects and that he should observe non-violence in thought, words and deeds, clearly reveals the fact that the seeds of satyagraha were embedded in Jaina philosophy. He included the virtues of Jainism in the vows of satyagrahi. Gandhi also brought into account the principle of Buddhism. Like Buddha he too emphasised the greatest happiness of all or sarvodaya. He too inflicted suffering to his soul for removing the suffering of the world. Like Buddha, Gandhi also pleaded for the cultivation of good feelings towards the opponent. What Buddha taught the entire mankind, Gandhi taught the satyagrahi's. The universal virtuous nature of non-violence was imbibed into him from Buddhism with Buddha being the symbol of truth and non-violence of all ages. After Buddha, Gandhi was the real propagator and follower of the Buddhist vital principle of truth and non-violence. Thus, what Gandhi pleaded in the 20th century A.D was preached by Buddha in the 8th century B.C.

While staying in South Africa Gandhi also read about the life of Prophet Mohammed and realised that Islam too insisted on conscience and soul-force. It recommended moral codes which made Gandhi believe that Islam stood for tolerance and fellow feeling. More than any other religion, it was Christianity which had a distinct impact on Gandhi's formation of ideas. The very life of Jesus was a lesson in self-suffering for him. He seems to have adopted the law of love, non-violent resistance and the efficacy of suffering from the teachings of Christianity.

Henry David Thoreau an American anarchist made an immense impact on Mahatma Gandhi in strengthening, and spreading and practicing the philosophy of satyagraha. He for the first time used the term civil-disobedience and introduced the practice of non-payment of taxes against the slavery of his country. Gandhi adopted these two principles and implemented them as and when the situation demanded. He reshaped the principle of civil-disobedience given by Thoreau. Thoreau had confined applied civil-disobedience to the political sphere only, but Gandhi applied his restructured civil-disobedience in all areas where it could be of benefit.

Thoreau had not only propounded civil disobedience, but clarified the potentiality of non-cooperation which was later enlarged by Gandhi as a social technique of action combined with a purely non-violent character, because according to Gandhi:

“Thoreau was not perhaps an out-and-out champion of non-violence. Probably, also, Thoreau limited his breach of statutory laws to the revenue law, i.e., payment of taxes, whereas the term civil disobedience as practised in 1919 covered a breach of any statutory and unmoral law. It signified the resister's outlawry in a civil, i.e., non-violent manner. He invoked the sanctions of the law and cheerfully suffered imprisonment. It is a branch of satyagraha.”¹²

Though Thoreau's influence upon Gandhi was far greater, Emerson directly influenced Gandhi. Thoreau's influence upon Gandhi may be also credited to

Emerson's teachings indirectly. Gandhi learnt the true sense of education in thought, speech and actions from the essays of Emerson that contained Indian wisdom. Gandhi held Emerson in great esteem throughout his life. Leo Tolstoy was another great personality who influenced the evolution of the Gandhian concepts of satyagraha. Gandhi wrote to a friend from Sabarmati Ashram that:

“There is no doubt that Tolstoy's writing had a powerful effect on me. He strengthened my love of non-violence. He enabled me to see things more clearly than I had done before.”¹³

Besides Tolstoy, Thoreau and Emerson, Ruskin has also been instrumental in the transformation of Gandhi's thoughts. He learned the dignity of manual labour, the idea that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all. The one book that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in his life was *Unto This Last*. Gandhi wrote, “I translated it later into Gujarati entitling it Sarvodaya (the welfare of all).”¹⁴ It was this work which inspired him to establish the Phoenix Settlement on the principles of bread labour and the responsibility of the community to provide for the physical welfare of its workers. This work of Ruskin's brought an immediate practical transformation in Gandhi. He quickly put these principles into practice. Thus we notice that many of the socio-political reforms made by Gandhi were guided by the vital principles of Ruskin. He also derived the principles of moral regeneration of man and moralization of politics and economics from Ruskin's thoughts and ideas.

However even though at its face value, it may seem that Gandhi may have borrowed several ideas from varied sources, it is true that he exhibited a rare capacity to blend all those, infuse it with a spirit of freshness and modify it in keeping with the situation it needed to be applied to. He did much the same to his concept of satyagraha. He was the first individual to declare that the search for truth through the means of non-violence was within the reach of all ordinary mortals. Not only could it be applied in other areas than religion, it could also be used as a weapon to eradicate social, economic and political evils and injustices. Gandhi's philosophy of satyagraha based on truth, non-violence, self-suffering and the discipline of renunciation, non-attachment and brahmacharya, that he incorporated in his ashram life were all rooted in tradition. Truth and non-violence were the pole star of the entire philosophy of Gandhi which were also the first among all the vows and moral principles observed and advocated by him.

Gandhi said that truth is the first principle of satyagraha which is not only present in speech but also in thought and deed. It is not limited to a few aspects of life but lies at the very root of existence. Satyagraha is a relentless search for truth and a determination to achieve it. Gandhi pointed out that: "Where there is truth, there also is knowledge which is true that is why the word *chit* or knowledge is associated with the name of God. Hence we know God as *sat-chit-ananda*."¹⁵ To find truth as God, the only means is love, that is non-violence and so he said God is Love. Ajay Shankar Rai mentioned in his book, *Gandhian Satyagraha: An Analytical and Critical Approach* that:

“Truth also requires self analysis and self purification. It cannot be attained if one remains under the influence of lust, anger, greed infatuation, pride and falsehood. It is only through taking the moral path that a person can achieve truth. Moral purity, and a constant effort to keep away from evil enables a person to adhere to truthfulness in thought, speech and action. Truthfulness in speech and action is the natural outcome of the truthfulness in thought.”¹⁶

According to Gandhi, without ahimsa, it is not possible to seek and find truth. Gandhi points out that:

“With satya combined with ahimsa, you can bring the world to your feet. Satyagraha in its essence is nothing but the introduction of truth and gentleness in the political, i.e., the national, life.”¹⁷

Again he tells us that ahimsa is the soul of truth with truth being the end and ahimsa the means.

Ahimsa held an important place within satyagraha. It is not limited only to the avoidance of physical injury for it takes into consideration not only actions but thoughts and words also. The doctrine of ahimsa, according to Gandhi, should be the first stage of satyagraha. Satyagraha holds no worth without non-violence which goes beyond love. Ahimsa and love are, after truth, the most significant terms in the Gandhian technique, and have a wide range of meaning. It includes the positive connotations of sympathy, affection, generosity and self-sacrifice, and the negative ones of non- injury and non-violence.

As already pointed out satyagraha means holding on to truth steadily. So it is a persistence of truth which later on takes the form of truth force and since satyagraha involves love as the only means for its realisation, it is also a soul-force. Just as ahimsa has been regarded as the weapon of the brave, so is satyagraha. Satyagraha based on love, involves forgiveness which is not an attribute of the weak but can only belong to the brave. The weak cannot forgive those who oppose and harm. It is only the brave who forgive even those with an intention to kill. Love is applicable to all circumstances and to all alike. Satyagraha too is applicable to all conditions and circumstances with no limit to its possibilities. But a satyagrahi has limits that he cannot go beyond. Gandhi forbids a satyagrahi to grapple with situations that may be impossible to deal with on account of some individual shortcoming. This shows Gandhi's sensitivity along with his rational and practical approach when it comes to the question of applying satyagraha. Thus truth is the end that can be achieved only through non-violent means. One is the highest law while the other is the highest duty. It becomes imperative that one has to have, "love not only to our neighbours, not only to our friends, but love even to those who may be our enemies."¹⁸

In the views of Gandhi, *tapasya* i.e. self suffering is the essential ingredient of satyagraha. Gandhi viewed self-suffering as a viable manoeuvre to confront the violence that is often leveled at those who work to remove social injustices. The ability to engage in self-suffering requires considerable courage and self-control. In fact, Gandhi describes the self-discipline required of someone who follows his

principles as being akin to those of a military soldier. Like soldiers, individuals who practice *tapasya* require extensive training to establish the needed discipline when violence is leveled at them. Satyagraha requires that sort of *tapasya* to help the person to practice satyagraha to its fullest for the result is hard to come without the practice of *tapasya*.

Self-suffering is an essential expression of non-violence and truth. For Gandhi it is an essential expression of truth because unless one is prepared to suffer, one can hardly be committed to anything, let alone the truth. In any serious conflict, suffering is always involved for the contending parties. But for a satyagrahi who conducts struggle according to the principles of a satyagrahi, there is a greater suffering involved because he does not take a partisan view of truth. Gandhi believes self-suffering to be the best way to win over the adversary for it makes a direct appeal to the heart and ultimately to the conscience. The weapon of satyagraha can be used by a truthful person who has an undying faith in the righteousness of his cause and is ready to undergo any amount of suffering, even death, in its defence. That makes a satyagrahi fearless in the face of most violent and brutal oppression. Satyagraha excludes the use of violence even in the most extreme circumstances, which makes satyagraha the best action plan of Gandhi and one that could protect human dignity.

When all persuasive efforts of the satyagrahi fail to appeal to the reason of his opponent then Gandhi advises the satyagrahi to appeal to the heart of the

opponent by resorting to self-suffering, self-injury and self-sacrifice. V.P. Gaur writes in his book, *Mahatma Gandhi: A Study of his message of non-violence* that

“First satyagrahi will try to appeal to the good sense and reason of the opponent but if he is not moved he will appeal to his sentiments which he will arouse by causing suffering to his ownself.... Gandhiji believed in the efficacy of self-suffering.”¹⁹

It can be said that the entire structure of Gandhian ideas is based on the principles of truth (*satya*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*). It is also noted that for Gandhi ‘Truth is God’. Therefore Satyagraha is a way of life in which there is complete faith in, and dependence upon God. From truth is derived the principle of love. A real satyagrahi is “a man of God”²⁰ whose heart is full of love for all creatures, for love is the principle of God. Gandhi also said that truth, love and non-violence should also be applied by a satyagrahi in day to day existence. Satyagraha was thus recommended as a new way of life and a new technique for social change, that when confronted with evil or injustice, would resort to non-violent resistance and self-suffering without the slightest ill-will towards the evil-doer. One of the most important characteristics of the satyagraha was never to tolerate or submit either to evil or injustice or tyranny of any kind. Gandhi said that a satyagrahi would always have to resist evil through love and non-violence and without ill will.

Gandhi clarified that the self-suffering aspect of satyagraha was derived from *tapas* as it had the potentiality to bear fruit depending upon its intensity. Self-suffering generated the capacity and strength required by a satyagrahi to overcome injustice and bring about social and political changes required for the betterment of the society. This resilience was produced by welcoming suffering, from the opponent on oneself rather than imposing it on him. Self-suffering, the purest form of *tapas* as advocated by Gandhi was that factor which provided an intensity to the Gandhian techniques and principles. Self-suffering was never invited by a satyagrahi for his own benefit but was directed towards the conversion of the opponent by cleansing and strengthening his spirit. It invoked courage in the satyagraha leaving no room for cowardice.

Besides the three major concepts of truth, non-violence and self-suffering there were other corollaries that provided a strong foundation to the concept of satyagraha. Fearlessness or *abhaya* was one such necessity to practice satyagraha. Fearlessness is the moral principle which is indispensable for the development of truth and non-violence. Fear lies at the root of untruth and violence resulting in cowardice, which in itself is possibly the greatest violence, far greater than bloodshed for it inculcates violence. It comes from want of faith in God and ignorance of attributes of God. Truth and non-violence can be cultivated only by the strong and strength lies in absence of fear and not in the flesh and blood our bodies are made of. Satyagraha cannot be practiced without fearlessness. Only those who are free from fear, alone can follow the path of satyagraha. Gandhi

mentioned that moral bravery is in fact the greatest heroism, and it consists not in injuring others, but in the readiness to sacrifice patiently and fearlessly everything including life for the good of other fellow beings, out of love for all. Fearlessness is in fact the essential precondition to practice non-violence and for insistence on truth. In the absence of this one can never become a true satyagrahi.

Gandhi believed that satyagraha had its origin in purity which is also considered as one of the basic requirements of satyagraha. Purity of thoughts and deeds is a must for every satyagrahi. Satyagraha as a principle thus included various aspects that provided it a unique and character. But it was never conceived as a principle alone devoid of a method or technique of curbing socio-political evils within a society. According to R.R. Diwakar in his book, *Sage of Satyagraha*, that:

“There were six main points that may be considered essential in the technique of a satyagraha, the grievance must be genuine, the opponent must have been given the fullest chance to correct himself, all other remedies must have been exhausted the resistance must be non-violence in the shape of inviting self-suffering with full faith in truth or God, the suffering must be ungrudging, cheerful and with goodwill even towards him who inflicts it and therefore should be humility all through and a readiness to compromise without giving up principles.”²¹

The logical approach to the solution of a problem helped him to seek ways in which the strength of the Indians could be extended to its maximum and those of

the Britishers could be eliminated. Since he had immense faith in the goodness of an opponent he believed in exhausting all means of converting the opponent before he would resort to direct action. Gandhi tried to appeal to the conscience of the opponent with whom he was engaged in a conflict through his purificatory method.

Further non-cooperation is a very important step of satyagraha. Gandhi asserts that non-cooperation to the demands of evils, oppression, exploitation and violence of any type is the highest duty of the satyagrahi and in doing so he must accept and bear the hardships, sufferings and penalties courageously and spiritedly. Gandhi himself terms it as a means to secure the co-operation of the opponent with truth and justice. Non-cooperation means withdrawal of cooperation by the people to the state because the state has become corrupt. Non-cooperation is in fact a prelude to cooperation. Once the evil or the abuse is removed, the people can cooperate.

Gandhi advocated a non-cooperation that was coupled with truth and justice. It is a method to achieve self-perfection and purification, the method adopted by Gandhi which made him to be a Mahatma. The main purpose of non-cooperation apart from purification is to get rid of the feeling of helplessness by making oneself independent to govern one's own self in all possible affairs, and fulfilling both the object to refrain from promoting or actively doing any violence to individual or property. Non-cooperation can be described as a fact of education

which develops and crystallizes public opinion and when it gets organised enough for effective action it moves towards its goal. It is an effective, active, strong and forceful method which is suitable anywhere and everywhere by men and women, old, young and children alike, because in its totality it is an expression of unconditional love.

At a more official level after boycotting the law courts, lawyers can play their role through the arbitration councils. Thus, it can be said that non-cooperation the precondition of its success is the determination of self-sacrifice and suffering. Gandhi declared that:

“Non-co-operation is not a movement of brag, bluster, or bluff. It is a test of our sincerity. It requires solid and silent self sacrifice. It challenges our honesty and our capacity for national work. It is a movement that aims at translating ideas into action. And the more we do, the more we find that much more must be done than we had expected.”²²

Picketing shops and institutions etc. was also a manifestation of non-cooperation. The purpose of peaceful picketing was also to put socio-politico-economic pressure on the government and simultaneously to create political consciousness and the spirit of swadeshi amongst the masses. The attitude and behaviour of pickets should be non-violent as it is only to dissuade the wrong doers. No forcible insistence, insult or intimidation should be acted on and a speech which is gentle and inoffensive should be used. The picket's duty is essentially to enter into a discussion with the wrong-doers to entreat them and to

beg of them to be just. Gandhi was of the opinion that picketing like *hartal*, should of be a persuasive nature and not coercive. Both, during the non-cooperation movement and the civil disobedience movement of 1930-34, Gandhi urged picketing, preferably by women, of foreign as well as country made liquor shops and foreign cloth shops. However, Gandhi did not favour *dharna* which literally means setting down on strike, as a method of picketing. During *dharna* people sit down or lie flat on the ground in order to obstruct the passage of their adversaries or of those who defy public opinion. According to Gandhi, *dharna* has a streak of violence built in for it places the opponent in a most awkward and even humiliating position. Gandhi was of the opinion that picketing is quite different from *dharna* because *dharna* is a form of passive resistance, while on the other hand picketing is not a passive resistance. *Dharna* is in fact a coercive method of social restraint, which is not civil because it crudely uses violence. Gandhi considered *dharna* to be worse than violence because if one fights with the opponent, he at least enables the opponent to return the blow. But when one challenges the opponents to walkover the satyagrahis, knowing full well that it will not be possible the opponent is placed in a most awkward and humiliating position. So, Gandhi discouraged picketing in the form of *dharna*.

Apart from boycott and picketing there is also a method of peaceful raid that was the part of the practice of the satyagraha. The methods of peaceful raids were an advanced stage of boycott and peaceful picketing. The satyagrahi adopting this method does so and in order to bring economic pressure and the

pressure of public opinion on his opponent. In doing so harm is inflicted on the latter's goods, though not to his person. It is peaceful in the sense that no injury is done to the person of the opponent. In peaceful raids, the satyagrahis, in violation of law, deliberately indulge in the act of looting. They take away the goods despite the adversary's resistance, for they think the loot to be a commodity meant for universal consumption and not for monopolization or black marketing. During the salt satyagraha (1930) peaceful raids were made on various salt depots and the raider's took away large quantities of salt even as *lathi's* were charged on them and bullets shot at them.

Strike is also an active and powerful method of non-cooperation, a well known weapon of satyagraha which was mainly put to use by the working class, for it was supposed to be an inherent right of the working man or woman for the purpose of securing justice. Strike is the labourer's instrument for the acquisition of a desired standard of treatment and living from the employer, and is also employed to achieve political ends. However it is said to be undesirable in public utility services like the railways and the postal services etc. because it creates huge public inconveniences. It is different from *hartal*, because the domain of strike is limited to public offices, factories etc., which is why strike effects the government machinery directly and only indirectly the people. The participants in strike are never common people but only working class or government servants. *Hartal* is different from strike. Even though it is a technique of non-cooperation it is a general cessation of work protesting against a particular act or policy of an

institution or government. *Hartal* means voluntary closure of shops and suspension of business, usually for a symbolic period of twenty four hours or for a limited period and is not to be continued indefinitely. It is an overt representation of society's disapproval of the unwarranted imposition of unjust laws and orders as it was employed to lodge people's protest against the arrest of satyagrahis and the visits of government officials.

Gandhi applied this method for the first time during his South African satyagraha movement on 28th July, 1907 to express of the extreme dissatisfaction of the Transvaal Indian businessmen with the Asiatic Registration Act. According to Gandhi, *hartal* is to be organised in a systematic manner. It is the duty of *hartalis* to undertake the task of educating the masses regarding the need for observing the *hartal* as a mark of protest, a day prior to its observation. The requisite element of *hartal* is education because peaceful *hartals* could be possible only if the people are properly educated about the nature and objective of *hartal*. Gandhi laid down certain limitations in the operation of *hartals* such as there should be no *hartal* without a genuine cause. Political *hartals* should not be mixed up with economic or social *hartals* and that the unions should not paralyse the life of the whole nation on the day of *hartal*. Thus *hartal* as a form of non-cooperation should be purely nonviolent and absolutely voluntary in nature.

Another major technique employed by Gandhi was civil disobedience. Gandhi says "All civil disobedience is a part of branch of satyagraha but all satyagraha is not civil disobedience."²³ Civil disobedience meant the disobedience

of the state laws that were objectionable but the violation of such law was to be done in a courteous manner. Gandhi writes in *Young India* that:

“Civil disobedience is rebellion without the element of violence in it. An out-and-out civil resister simply ignores the authority of the state and becomes an outlaw claiming to disregard every nonmoral state law. Thus, for instance, he may refuse to pay taxes, he may refuse to recognize the authority of the state in his daily intercourse.”²⁴

Tendulkar quotes Gandhi in his book, *Mahatma*, that:

“Civil disobedience then emphatically means our desire to surrender to a single unarmed policeman. Our triumph consists in thousands being led to prisons like lambs to the slaughter house. Our triumph consists again in being imprisoned for no wrong whatsoever.”²⁵

Gandhi observed that there is a strict difference between civil disobedience and criminal disobedience. For disobedience to be civil, it must be sincere, respectful, restrained, non-violent and never defiant. In civil disobedience, anarchy does not have any place but criminal disobedience leads to anarchy. Criminal disobedience can be removed by dint of force but such is not the case with civil disobedience for the civil resister means no harm to the state. Civil disobedience is really a synthesis of civility and disobedience, non-violence and resistance. Gandhi held that resistance to unfair laws were essential for man's moral growth and a call for a stable social order. Gandhi said that civil disobedience is the inherent right of every citizen, and a sacred duty of every citizen against unjust and immoral laws.

Gandhi also resorted to fasting till death on few occasions. The most delicate and purest form of satyagraha is fasting. Unlike some other forms of satyagraha, Gandhi himself initiated this kind of satyagraha. Gandhi defined fasting in his autobiography as a way of personal cleansing and penance. But it can also be instrumental for remedying injustice and evil in society. Gandhi says:

“It dawned upon me that fasting could be made as powerful a weapon of indulgence as of restraint. Many similar later experiences of mine as well as of others can be adduced as evidence of this startling fact.”²⁶

Fasting is to check the violence to purify social and political atmosphere. The goal of fasting is self-purification and this self purification is also in some sense a precondition for fasting. Gandhi believed that:

“Satyagraha in the form of fasting cannot be undertaken as against an opponent. Fasting can be resorted to only against one’s nearest and dearest and that solely for his or her good.”²⁷

He realised that a lot depended on the satyagrahi whenever he resorted to fasting. He had to be pure, spiritually equipped for the action and be ready to apply the method with a view to appeal to the heart and soul of the opponent. Gandhi argued that there was no room for coercion in fasting as the rules governing it were truly non-violent in character.

An individual becomes eligible to fasting only if he satisfies certain conditions. He should have love for the opponents and should have renounced

worldly possessions. He should have inner strength and should not attach importance to success. Once the satyagrahi undertakes the fast, he must stick to his decisions.

Non-possession is also a form of non-cooperation. The strategy of non-possession worked as a ploy to impress upon the government that it cannot threaten the people to cooperate with it or obey its commands for there is nothing that the government can forcibly seize or confiscate from the satyagrahi. This method was employed by Gandhi during the Bardoli Satyagraha (1928), the Salt Satyagraha (1930), and the second non-violent Non-cooperation Movement (1932).

Boycott is also a part of satyagraha. It is defined as a punishment. Gandhi said that the object of the boycott of commodities, titles, persons and institutions is not only to lodge protest against but also to put pressure on the opposite party to seek redressal of grievances. Patil writes that the idea is to avenge oneself against the adversary for the wrongs done by him. It is employed to bring about a breakdown of law and order and thus to communicate to the lawmakers that the satyagrahis would not be a party to wrong doing.

Constructive programme is also included in satyagraha. The purpose of the constructive programme is to achieve economic self-sufficiency and inculcate the spirit of swadeshi amongst the masses. It can be employed also for the promotion of communal harmony and the removal of social evils like untouchability, unemployment and illiteracy. As a sample of total non-cooperation with the

British rule in India, it was employed also to replace governmental institutions with voluntary, public (national) institutions. Gandhi drew up a pledge laying down the discipline required of every satyagrahi volunteer. In 1939 he briefly stated the qualifications of a satyagrahi thus:

“He must have a living faith in God. He must believe in truth and non-violence as his creed and, therefore, have faith in the inherent goodness of human nature which he expects to evoke by his truth and love expressed through his suffering. He must lead a chaste life and be ready and willing for the sake of his cause to give up his life and possessions. He must be a habitual khadi-wearer and spinner. He must be a teetotaler and free from the use of other intoxicants. He must carry out with a willing heart all the rules of discipline as may be laid down from time to time. He should carry out the jail rules unless they are specially devised to hurt his self-respect.”²⁸

Satyagraha aims primarily at resolving conflict as in the Gandhian scheme a very quick disposal of conflicts was required. Further, satyagraha was meant to change the attitudes rather than just the behaviour of the opponents. It goes beyond redressing merely the immediate grievances but aims towards resolving the long standing distrust and friction that are the underlying causes of conflict. The basic aim of satyagraha is a conversion of opposing parties so that they both come on to the same side and become partners in attempting to solve the conflicts.

Gandhi also formed some rules for satyagraha by following which men become true satyagrahis. These rules are described in *Young India* and Verma writes in his book that Gandhi prescribed the strictest commandments for the satyagrahi to observe:

“A satyagrahi, i.e. a civil resister, will harbor no anger. He will suffer the anger of the opponent.”²⁹

In doing so he will put up with the assaults of the opponent and never retaliate, but at the same time will never submit out of fear of punishment. When any person in authority seeks to arrest a civil resister, he will voluntarily submit to the arrest and he will not resist the attachment or removal of his own property, if any, when it is sought to be confiscated. However if a civil resister has any property in his possession as a trustee, he will refuse to surrender it, even though in defending it he might lose his life. He will never take any retaliatory action and never insult his opponent or act in any way non-complementary to the spirit of ahimsa.

A civil resister was not to salute the Union Jack, nor would he insult it or any officials, English or Indian. In the course of the struggle, if any one insults an official or commits an assault upon him, a civil resister was supposed to protect the officials from the insult or assault at the risk of his own life.

A civil resister would behave with due decorum towards prison officials and observe the discipline of the prison in as much as it did not compromise his self respect. Such as he would accept cleanly cooked and served food, which is not contrary to his religion, and would refuse it if done otherwise.

A civil resister would never discriminate from any other prisoner and in no way regard himself as superior to the rest, nor would he seek any conveniences that may not be required for keeping his body in good health and condition. A civil resister will not fast for want of conveniences whose deprivation does not involve any injury to one's self respect. A civil resister will joyfully obey all orders issued by the leader of the group, whether they please him or not. He will carry out orders in the first instance, even though they appear to him to be insulting, inimical or foolish, and then appeal to higher authority. He is free to determine the fitness of the group to satisfy him before joining it, but after he has joined it, it becomes his duty to submit to its discipline, irksome or otherwise. If something about the group appears to a member to be improper or immoral, he has a right to sever his connection, but being within it, he has no right to commit a breach of its discipline. No civil resister is to expect maintenance for his dependents as the civil resister entrusts his dependents to the care of God. Even in ordinary warfare wherein hundreds of thousands give themselves up to it, they are able to make no previous provision but hardly anybody is left to starve. No civil resister will intentionally become a cause of communal quarrels. In the event of any such outbreak, he will not take sides, but he will assist only that party which is demonstrably in the right. Being a hindu he will be generous towards mussalmans and others, and will sacrifice himself in the attempt to save non-hindus from a hindu attack. And if an attack is from the other side, he will not participate in any retaliation but will give his life in protecting hindus. If there is a procession of

satyagrahis they will do nothing that would injure the religious susceptibilities of any community, and they will not take part in any processions that are likely to wound such susceptibilities.

Satyagraha can be observed to be the most practical application of truth and non-violence. It is perhaps one of the most significant of doctrines of Gandhi. The entire philosophy of satyagraha can be summarised in one sentence given by E. S. Jones in his book, *Gandhi* as “The quintessence of Gandhism is Satyagraha”³⁰ Through satyagraha Gandhi evolved his novel technique of resisting evil and injustice prevailing in a society. For Gandhi satyagraha was more than just a technique of political action that could be researched into or observed from a distance. To understand its true meaning it had to be experienced by consistently following it. Gandhi often referred to it as soul-force, and for that reason there was no place for violence within it. Satyagraha was the moral equivalent of a war waged against injustice with love and with the purpose of conversion or transformation and not destruction. It had the dual purpose of delivering peace to both; the one who uses it and on the one on whom it is used, thus achieving so much without shedding even a drop of blood. Both sides emerge as winners. An application of satyagraha would perhaps be the most potential and significant way out of the unending strife teaching up the world.

(c) Swaraj

“Swaraj of my conception will come only when all of us are firmly persuaded that our swaraj has got to be won, worked and maintained through truth and ahimsa alone. True democracy or the swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means.”

(*Harijan*, 20.5.1939, CWMG, Vol.75, P.176)

The concept of ‘Swaraj’ was developed by Gandhi during the Indian freedom struggle. It is the prime pillar of Gandhi’s political philosophy. Gandhi gave it the content of an integral revolution that encompassed all spheres of life. Gandhi considered swaraj as the best form of government. Etymologically, ‘swaraj’ a Sanskrit word, containing *swa* and *raj* means self-rule or self-government. It is not new to the Indian context as it is derived from Vedic vocabulary being one of the eight polity listed in the *Aitreya Brahman* of *Rigveda*.¹

Gandhi was of the view that swaraj cannot be established merely by freeing India from British rule. Its establishment is possible only by ‘turning the search light inward’ so as to generate ‘soul-force’ or ‘love’. Gandhi infused in the notion of swaraj the capacity of self-assessment, self-purification and swadeshi i.e. self-reliance. Politically swaraj means self-governance and not just good governance. For Gandhi a good government is no substitute for self-government which would mean a continuous effort to be independent of the pressures of government

control, whether it is foreign or of one's own country. In other words, it is the sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority. Economically, *poorna swaraj* means full economic freedom for the toiling millions. For Gandhi, swaraj of the people meant the sum total of the swaraj (self-rule) of individuals. He describes it thus:

“Swaraj for me means freedom for the meanest of our country men.....I am not interested in freeing India merely from English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever. I have no desire to exchange king log for king strok.”²

Real swaraj comes only when the masses become conscious of their capacity to regulate authority when it goes astray. Gandhi wrote that:

“Real swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words; swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.”³

Swaraj was both an ideal and a principle in the Indian struggle for freedom. As an ideal, it chalked out an ideological paradigm against the policies of the colonial power, and as a principle, it provided the nationalists with an outline and sketch for independent India. Swaraj was never conceived by Gandhi in its narrow sense of ‘Political Independence’, but much rather in its wider implication, becoming much more than what is thought of as mere political independence. In

the Indian political and social discourse, the term swaraj was used to denote three overlapping notions. These notions were home rule, independence and freedom. It had been used in this sense before Gandhi came to serve for the Indian National Movement. For Gandhi, swaraj meant much more than this. Home rule meant that Indians should rule in place of the British. The term independence was used in the sense of political transfer of power, while freedom implied freedom from slavery. For Gandhi, swaraj was a much more comprehensive notion. He defined swaraj as: “It is swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves.”⁴

To rule oneself meant to have control over one's mind and passions and to lead a moral and duty bound life. Generally, the term swaraj was used to describe political and economic independence. But Gandhi used it in a different sense and analysed it under four headings- national independence, political freedom, economic freedom and self-rule. B.N. Ray, in his book *Reading Gandhi*, wrote that in the view of Gandhi, the first three are negative in character because national independence is freedom from alien rule, political freedom of the individual is freedom from oppression by other individuals, groups or the state, and the economic freedom of the individual is freedom from poverty. While the true meaning of swaraj reflects in freedom as self-rule that is positive in character. It is a state of being, to which everyone, especially those who are politically and economically free ought to aspire.⁵ Gandhi's path to self-rule was through political and economic freedom, he never lost sight of the self-rule which is the backbone of swaraj. He also finds ways and means to achieve self-rule through political and

economic freedom. Gandhi was very well aware that India is a multi-ethnic, multi-caste, multi-lingual and multi-religious country. If swaraj had to be achieved in the true sense, the economic, political and most significantly spiritual freedom of the individual was of much importance and freedom at individual level had to be the principle characteristic of independent India. Gandhi's concept of swaraj as national independence was articulated in the Declaration of Independence which he wrote in 1930. In this declaration, Gandhi gave a philosophical account of why India should be independent and encouraged the masses to attain independence through non-violent means. He wanted to make his fellow countrymen aware of the fact that political independence is necessary but not sufficient whether it be at the individual level or for the over all development of the country. By attaining independence the people of India would gain confidence. This was put by Gandhi as:

“Mere withdrawal of the English is not Independence. It means the consciousness in the average villager that he is the maker of his own destiny, he is his own legislator through his chosen representatives.”⁶

Gandhi also tries to convey that national independence and self-rule are distinct in nature. He said India should gain independence which would then give its citizens license to do as they like but only within a disciplined and self-restrained frame work.

The second aspect of Gandhian swaraj is the political freedom of the individual. The freedom of individual can be referred to as a right of the individual for Gandhi advocated freedom as a right. Anthony J. Parel in an article, *Gandhi, Freedom and Self-rule*, writes:

“In modern political thought individual political freedom is often spoken of as a ‘right’ or ‘rights’.”⁷

From the time of South Africa, Gandhi fought for the rights of the people. He felt that in South Africa citizens were devoid of any rights. He realised that without rights individuals are treated as sub-human. Political freedom through swaraj is not what Gandhi was looking for entirely. There were two different perspectives altogether regarding political freedom. For the moderates, it is autonomy within the periphery of British administration, whereas for the extremists there was a demand of no less than the evacuation of Britishers from India. Although their positions were quite different both aspired for swaraj and wanted the rights, an individual should be entitled to. In defending the rights of the people. Gandhi used the tool of satyagraha. Gandhi defined satyagraha in the following lines:

“Passive resistance (satyagraha) is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of the resistance by arm.”⁸

The famous resolution on fundamental rights and economic changes of 1931 was something of a great achievement of Gandhi. This resolution was

drafted by Gandhi along with his political heir, Jawahar Lal Nehru. This resolution had much of what a good constitution contains. Gandhi said that:

“This resolution to enable the masses to appreciate what swaraj.... will mean to them.”⁹

To Gandhi, political independence would mean nothing unless it guarantees the rights of the individual. Gandhi defended the rights of people in his own peculiar way. His view of freedom and rights is based on Indian philosophy that treats human beings as body-soul composites who are social beings by nature. As Gandhi mentioned:

“Man is not born to live in isolation but is essentially a social animal independent and inter-dependent.”¹⁰

Rights are not enough for the political peace of human beings. For this rights should be complemented with duty and work together. He further was of the view that duty should come before rights as they are the outcome of the performance of duties. He rejected the idea of placing rights over duties. Gandhi makes this point thus:

“All rights to be deserved and preserved came from duty well done. Thus the very right to live accrues to us only when we do the duty of citizenship of the world. From this one fundamental statement, perhaps it is easy enough to define the duties of man and woman and correlate every right to some corresponding duty to be first performed. Every other right can be shown to be usurpation hardly worth fighting for.”¹¹

Gandhi shows the world how rights can be acquired through non-violent ways. Gandhi collected ideas regarding rights both, from western and eastern thought and through that forged a defence of rights and freedom of the individual which he felt were primarily based on peaceful and non-violent means.

Economic freedom of the individual is yet another major dimension of swaraj. Poverty is the bane for India's progress. Each individual needs the basic necessities of life i.e. decent food, clothing, and proper dwelling, which was Gandhi's criterion for judging the economic state of people. Gandhi knew that it was the exploitative nature of colonialism which was the major cause of poverty prevailing in the country. He said that:

“The economic constitution of India and for the matter of that the world should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing.”¹²

Gandhi voluntarily lived as the poorest of the poor would live. This was according to Gandhi, an act of penance or spiritual protest against the poverty of the masses of India. By doing so he also tried to form a solidarity with them. Gandhi thought that economic freedom had to come simultaneously with political freedom. He had taken as:

“...understood that anything that helped India to get rid of the grinding poverty of her masses would in the same process also establish swaraj.”¹³

Gandhi's ideas of economic freedom did not accept possession of property that a private body owns and that a human being had no absolute right to private property. He attributes this to the notion of trusteeship. This economic condition which Gandhi defended could be possible, if a certain arrangement within society became possible. In addition to this Gandhi also gave great importance to certain institutions, which would work towards the economic emancipation of the individual in the society. His theory was not based upon mass production, as is popular in the west but on production by the masses which involved a major population of the country. As a result small agricultural projects, village industries and small scale industries were raised. The reason behind Gandhi's opposition to the modern industries was that it favoured those who had ample capital. Heavy and large scale industries brought about the concentration of wealth and power under the control of a few, whereas Gandhi felt that production and consumption should be localized and benefit all the people belonging to that locality rather than just a few. Big industries would hamper the cause of the small farmers and artisans ultimately causing an unbridgeable divide between the rich and poor. He promoted khadi, spinning and weaving in order to produce goods that could benefit a large number of people working from within small cottage industries or from their homes itself. It is symbolic of an effort to safeguard the interests of the lower section of the society. Now in the present day scenario, India is among the top emerging economies of the world. The irony is that on the one hand in the Forbes list among top ten richest persons of the world, five belong to India but on the

other, a major chunk of the people living below the poverty line also live in India. A wide gap among the rich and poor is apparent. The giant multi-national companies, especially from foreign lands, grab most of the markets of the country by sidelining the small indigenous players. Small-scale industries are only confined to about forty odd miniature items which are under the protection category. This trend of the market is a hindrance in attaining what Gandhi dreamt of economic swaraj.

The most positive aspect of swaraj is its spiritual notion or the idea of self-rule. Embedded within self-rule is a positivity and a power to posit morality in the society. Political and economic freedom would arrive simultaneous to the departure of the colonial powers ruling India but the acquisition of spiritual freedom and implementation of self-rule could be attained only through the practice of control and self-restraint. This unique dimension of achievement of true swaraj came from the very depth of Gandhi's intentions for his countrymen. Self-rule is a not something that can be thrust from outside but has to be achieved through one's own singular efforts. It depends on the individual's internal strength and the will to fight for it against all odds. As in Gandhi's words:

“swaraj could not be granted even by God. We would have to earn it ourselves. Swaraj from its very nature is not in the giving of anybody.”¹⁴

Self-rule cannot be achieved by sitting idle and hoping for some miracle to happen for it can be achieved by undergoing self-sacrifice, self-effacement, and self-

suppression in one's own life. For an individual to achieve swaraj there are not only external obstacles but internal obstacles too that need to be overcome as well.

Swaraj, thus is not a rule to be exercised by any one particular individual over all others but equally by all. It is not the government of the omnipotent state but the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Its guiding principle is the principle of equity and justice. It is the rule of the individuals who give precedence for duties over rights and who have nothing but the welfare of the people at heart. Gandhi wrote:

“Swaraj of a people means the sum total of the swaraj (self-rule) of individuals. And such swaraj comes only from performance by individuals of their duty as citizens. In it no one thinks of his rights. They come, when they are needed, for better performance of duty.”¹⁵

Swaraj, whether it is political or economic should be exercised and shared equally by all and never monopolized by any one person. Gandhi wanted to establish that true swaraj will come when the possession of power is not in the hands of the few elite groups but handled by all fellow countrymen. About this Gandhi wrote:

“The swaraj of my—our—dream recognizes no race or religious distinctions. Nor is it to be the monopoly of lettered persons nor yet of moneyed men. Swaraj is to be for all, including the former, but emphatically including the maimed, the blind, the starving toiling millions.”¹⁶

Gandhi stood for the swaraj of the toiling millions who found it difficult to get one square meal a day. Real swaraj must be felt by all men, women and children.

Further real self-rule is liberation from India's own traditional disparity in addition to those forced from outside. This self-rule could translate into self-government or democracy which also reflects in Fred Dallmayr argument in his article *What is swaraj* in the book *Gandhi, Freedom and Self-rule* that:

“The self rule of a larger community that is, into the synonym for national democratic self government or home rule”¹⁷

Gandhi emphasised that self-rule which is real swaraj could be achieved only through moral and peaceful means. Ironically enough even after independence self-rule, as Gandhi envisioned it could not be implemented or enjoyed in its true sense on account of a division between the rulers and the ruled. National independence, political freedom, economic freedom and spiritual freedom of the individual all are required for *poorna swaraj* which the nation aspired for and which could be achieved only by achieving a fine balance between them. Gandhi emphasised all the aspects of swaraj as equally important, in his words:

“Let there be no mistake about my conception of swaraj. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So at one end you have political independence, at the other the economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding

end is dharma, i.e., religion in the highest sense of the term.”¹⁸

And further Gandhi correlates these notions of swaraj as four corners of a square within which even without any one aspect achievement of swaraj would be unrealistic. He said:

“Let us call this the square of swaraj, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue.”¹⁹

Gandhi always dreamt about a swaraj that would be complete in its nature. This swaraj would fulfill the basic needs and cater to freedom in all its aspects to be enjoyed both by the common man and the higher classes likewise. According to Gandhi swaraj is not *poorna swaraj* if it did not apply to all the citizens. He turned down the idea that Indian swaraj could be the rule of the majority community and the minority be ruled by them. To him this would be a disastrous move. As Gandhi wrote in *Young India*:

“It has been said that Indian Swaraj will be the rule of the majority community, i.e. the Hindus. There could not be a greater mistake than that. If it were to be true, I for one would refuse to call it Swaraj and would fight it with all the strength at my command, for to me Hind Swaraj is the rule of all the people, is the rule of justice.”²⁰

Gandhi used the prefix *poorna* meaning complete, before the term swaraj because it belongs as much to the rich as for the poor, as much for the rich land-owner as for the landless tiller of the soil. Gandhi's rule of justice lies in attaining

poorna swaraj where there should be equal opportunities for all. There also should be equal rights to the followers of all religions without any discrimination of caste, creed, and language or sex. Gandhi sees his concept of *poorna swaraj* as a dignified independence. In Gandhi's words:

“My notion of Purna Swaraj is not isolated independence but healthy and dignified independence. My nationalism, fierce though it is, is not exclusive, is not devised to harm any nation or individual.”²¹

Thus by *swaraj* Gandhi never meant majority rule. *Swaraj* for Gandhi is rule of all people. It is the rule of justice where self-discipline or rule over one-self is the first condition. *Swaraj* can be won only by one's own singular effort. What others can get for me is not home rule but foreign rule. Self-rule even if it leads to anarchy is better than foreign rule. Gandhi mentioned in *Hind swaraj*:

“Anarchy under Home-Rule were better than orderly, foreign rule.”²²

However Gandhi's *swaraj* is not merely a home-rule alone but needed to have certain qualification. To him real home-rule is self rule or self control. The way to it is through passive resistance that could be translated as possession of soul-force. *Swadeshi* is an important component in the exertion of this force. Lastly, it is our duty to do, what is required to attain *swaraj*. Then only will it become *poorna swaraj*. By *poorna swaraj* Gandhi further meant:

“An awakening among the masses, knowledge among them of their true interest and ability to serve that interest against the whole world.”²³

Through *poorna swaraj* Gandhi wished to establish harmony, freedom from aggression from within or without and a progressive improvement in the economic condition of the masses. Gandhi organised the people of India, especially the middle classes on the path of freedom which Tilak and Dada Bhai Naoraji had already paved the way for. His slogan “swaraj in a year”, at the time of the Khilafat Movement, was given with the motive to mobilize the masses of the country. B.R. Nanda mentions in his book, *Mahatma Gandhi*, that:

“A year was in Gandhi’s opinion long enough to awaken a people to make it shed its fear and stiffen its back bone.”²⁴

Gandhi mobilized the masses belonging to middle class rural India and made them realise what their rights and interests were and encouraged them to struggle for not just national independence but also the other aspects of swaraj in order to gain *poorna swaraj*. Gandhi did so by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.

Freedom of expression, according to Gandhi was an important factor for the attainment of swaraj. Gandhi wrote:

“Freedom of speech and pen is the foundation of swaraj. If the foundation stone is in danger, you have to exert the whole of your might in order to defend that single stone.”²⁵

It was his conviction that freedom and liberty alone could pave the way for progress and only self-rule alone had the potential to bring about that freedom. For Gandhi swaraj should have the ability to defend oneself against the whole world and to live life in perfect freedom. He further was of the view that a good government is no substitute for self-government. Swaraj as conceived by Gandhi can be maintained only if the nation has a large number of selfless workers who are ready to sacrifice even their lives for the cause of swaraj. Gandhi mentioned in *Young India* that:

“Progress towards swaraj will be in exact proportion to the increase in the number of workers who will dare to sacrifice their all for the cause of the poor.”²⁶

For Gandhi political power is only a means for enabling people to improve their conditions in each aspect of their lives. Gandhi wrote:

“Swaraj can never be a free gift by one nation to another. It is a treasure to be purchased with a nation's best blood. It will cease to be a gift when we have paid dearly for its....swaraj will be a fruit of incessant labour, suffering beyond measure.”²⁷

Swaraj without the use of truth and non-violence is the swaraj lacking in its true spirit for in Gandhi's view swaraj is impossible without non-violence. Swaraj together with non-violence would lead to the rich using their richness for the upliftment of their underprivileged countrymen. A non-violent swaraj would lead to a peaceful society. In the words of Gandhi:

“In non-violent Swaraj there can be no encroachment upon just rights; contrariwise no one can possess unjust rights. In a well-organised State, usurpation should be impossibility and it should be unnecessary to resort to force for dispossessing a usurper.”²⁸

Further, non-violent swaraj meant that nobody would remain anybody's enemy and fraternity between the people of the country would prevail. Gandhi believed that swaraj would prevail in the country only when the citizens place their duties before the rights. In his words:

“In Swaraj based on ahimsa, people need not know their rights, but it is necessary for them to know their duties. There is no duty but creates a corresponding right, and those only are true rights which flow from a due performance of one's duties. Hence rights of true citizenship accrue only to those who serve the State to which they belong. And they alone can do justice to the rights that accrue to them.”²⁹

Gandhi reiterates that the swaraj of his dreams could never be achieved through violent struggles, the manner in which most slave countries fought for their independence. The following words of Gandhi summarize the non-violent swaraj:

“The Swaraj of my conception will come only when all of us are firmly persuaded that our Swaraj has got to be won, worked and maintained through truth and ahimsa alone. True democracy or the Swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means, for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all

opposition through the suppression or extermination of the antagonists. That does not make for individual freedom. Individual freedom can have the fullest play only under a regime of unadulterated ahimsa.”³⁰

Gaining swaraj for India through non-violent means was only a beginning for Gandhi. In doing so, he wanted to spread the message of deliverance to the oppressed sections, demonstrating a way out of the western exploitation. His was truly a concern for all the people of this world. He said:

“Through the deliverance of India, I seek to deliver the so called weaker races of the earth from the crushing heels of the Western exploitation”.³¹ Hence he openly declared that “The Indian struggle is not anti- British, it is anti exploitation, anti foreign rule and not anti-foreigners.”³²

In many parts of the world, swaraj proposed by Gandhi was accepted and implemented to bring about not only a potential but an economic, social and above all a spiritual upliftment. Gandhi's concerns were directed towards all the people of their world in the spirit of citizens of the world.

Now here a question may arise that, in a country that follows swaraj would there be any need for a government. Gandhi's reply would be that some form of government would be required but its nature was not specified because it was in the process of being formed. Gandhi makes it clear in *Harijan*:

“I have purposely refrained from dealing with the nature of government in a society based deliberately on non-violence.... When society is deliberately constructed in

accordance with the law of non-violence, its structure will be different in material particulars from what it is today. But I cannot say in advance what the government based wholly on non-violence will be like.”³³

Gandhi wrote, if we wish to construct swaraj on the pillars of truth and non-violence the only way is to build-up from the bottom upwards through constructive efforts. This rules out the deliberate creation of an anarchical state. Thus for Gandhi, swaraj meant:

“The Government of India by the consent of the people ascertained by the vote of the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native-born or domiciled who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters.”³⁴

K.S. Bharti mentioned in his book, *Socio-Religious Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, that Gandhi wanted to establish a pre-dominantly non-violent state and give it the name, swaraj. Though, swaraj resembles the western type of democracy it possesses several moral principles such as non-violence, sarvodaya, rights of the minority, pursuit of moral criteria and decentralization.³⁵ Patil mentioned in his book, *Study on Gandhi* that, swaraj resembles the western type of democracy in as much as it has adopted the principles of sovereignty of the people, universal adult franchise and representation etc.³⁶

However, apart from these principles, Gandhi's conception of democracy or swaraj makes a number of significant departures from the western model of democracy. Being the champion of individual freedom by turning down the organised power of the state, a true follower of non-violence and having a consistent faith in the persuasion of moral life Gandhi has made the dignity and worth of human life central to his democratic policy. According to Gandhi:

“The dignity and worth of human person is the essence of democratic policy.”³⁷

Further, through swaraj Gandhi wanted to establish the sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority. In this regard he says:

“Democracy is an impossible thing until the power is shared by all, but let not democracy degenerate into mobocracy. Even a pariah, a labourer, who makes it possible for you to earn your living, will have his share in self-government.”³⁸

Thus Gandhi lays much stress on the essence and spirit of democracy. In this regard he rejected violence altogether and emphasised on non-violence as a tool with the purpose to change the heart of the opponent. Gandhi says:

“True democracy or Swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means.”³⁹

Gandhi makes sarvodaya the kernel of his democratic policy and accepts the state only as a means to promote the good of all people. Therefore it should be only a means for securing the greatest good and happiness of all citizens. In this

respect Gandhi declares that the people should owe loyalty to the state only so long as it performs its duties and responsibility properly and democratically and refrains from oppressing them. If the state deviates from its path then the people have not only the right but also the duty to resist the authority of the state. They have the moral right and duty to overturn the government whenever it tries to be dictatorial.

Democracy provides a platform for the moral upliftment of an individual that helps him to lead a self-regulated life. In this way, the individual will not disassociate from his countrymen and work for the betterment of the country. To Gandhi, the highest form of liberalism requires greatest levels of discipline and humanity and these traits should be preserved. Whenever only some selected few enjoy political power in a democratic state, democracy in its true sense ceases to exist. His primary apprehension lay with the society or the community rather than the state, which was secondary to him. A democratic state would not be concerned with violence for in its true sense it follows the dictates of non-violence strictly. The violent way leads to autocracy or dictatorship and only through non-violence can democracy be materialized. In Gandhi's words:

“Swaraj can be maintained, only where there is a majority of loyal and patriotic people to whom the good of the nation is paramount above all other considerations whatever, including their personal profit. Swaraj means government by the many. Where the many are immoral or selfish, their government can spell anarchy and nothing else.”⁴⁰

Gandhi also mentioned that democracy or swaraj gives to the individual maximum freedom of thought and expression. However Gandhi does not leave individual freedom unrestricted. According to him in a true democratic state the will of an individual has to be governed and limited by social will which is the state. He clarifies that:

“Democracy must in essence ... mean the art and science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of the people in the service of the common good of all.”⁴¹

Gandhi was very conscious of the authoritarian nature of the state, conscious of the fact that power often leads to corruption. For this reason Gandhi created an awareness among the masses of their power and dignity. He repeatedly reminded his countrymen that they were constitutive of the real power of the nation. Therefore, Gandhi worked towards dispersing state power to all the citizens thus prescribing the principle of decentralization. This had the dual purpose of fulfilling two objectives. First was to minimize the organised coercion and violence of the state, and the second to give the individual maximum freedom for his moral and mental development. Thus, for Gandhi real swaraj also meant decentralization.

In Gandhi's picture of independent India, the unit is the village community where every village has to become a self-sufficient republic or *panchayat*. In essence, the *panchayat* of every village would be a key unit for decentralization of executive, legislative and judicial powers. Village swaraj, thus would represent

true democracy wherein power and authority would be exercised by different functionaries. Non-violent democratic state of Gandhi's conception was to be a federation of more or less self-serving and self-governing village communities who would abide by the ideal of truth and non-violence. It was Gandhi's conviction that the establishment of swaraj was a requirement to save the villages. Thus every village would become a republic having complete powers and act as a unit of administration. And thereby even the last man would be a constitutive element of the framework responsible in the decision making process.

In Gandhi's scheme of village swaraj the individual is at the centre, then the village and finally the group of villages. It is not like a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom but an oceanic circle, whose centre will be the individual who is prepared to sacrifice everything for the cause of his village. Gandhi always reminded us that India lives not in her few cities but in her innumerable villages. Therefore if India has to attain true freedom, it should give due consideration to villages in which her soul lives. Gandhi's idea of village swaraj was that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours fulfilling its own basic needs and yet inter-dependent in catering to each other needs which go beyond the control of the primary unit. Thus Gandhi pleaded for village swaraj as a necessary precondition for actualizing a moral existence. Decentralization for Gandhi would lead to true democracy. He therefore, observed:

“True democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village.”⁴²

Gandhi's concept of decentralization starts from the bottom where people are independent in making their policies and in deciding and implementing them without any rigid and strict control of the higher authorities and their frequent interference in day to day working. Gandhi also defined the conditions for the attainment of swaraj. Swaraj, he observed was:

“In my opinion hangs on a thread, the spinning ‘thread’. Swaraj means the rule of Dharma. On charka alone the swaraj, depends. Boycott is an independence condition for the attainment of swaraj. When large numbers of wholly innocent men are in jail, we may take it that swaraj is not hand. Swaraj is the abandonment of the fear of death. Removal of (untouchability), the blot on Hinduism, is necessary for the attainment of swaraj. To get rid of the infatuation for English is one of the essentials of swaraj. Swaraj is democratic government. The real meaning of swaraj is that every poor person in country must have food and clothing. Swaraj means conditions in which a young girl could, without danger, move about alone at dead of night. For me the attainment of the Khilafat through India's power is the attainment of swaraj.”⁴³

Therefore, swaraj not only means independence but elimination of poverty and hunger, equality between classes and sexes, freedom from fear and hope for a

better future. The swaraj of Gandhi's dream remains a dream unfulfilled for the meaning of swaraj has not been understood. For Gandhi swaraj is a state of mind to be experienced by us and it has to be achieved by an inner strength. The achievement of swaraj consists in efforts. If it is not achieved in the first attempt, a second and a third, then as many more as necessary need to be put into practice.

Chapter IV

Social Orientation in G`andhi's Efforts

Past and present cannot be looked upon as isolated compartments. The new social ideologies are but the outcome of the past experiments and experiences. A well organised society is the result of the many reforms and changes in the previous setup of the society. Gandhi wanted to establish a new society, a society completely free from exploitation and oppression. He wanted a society where there is an equality for all with no demarcations of any kind. He worked for the freedom of individuals and nations. His efforts for the social reorganisation of the Indian society almost make him out to be a social scientist or a social engineer. He tried to emancipate the society on the principles of truth and non-violence, to achieve a country where equality and justice prevails. His objective was to achieve complete freedom, be it social, economic and political, so that every citizen should be capable of realising his innate nature in and through his social, cultural and physical developments.

In the eyes of Gandhi, individual welfare lies in the welfare of the society and also its vice-versa. This is constantly seen in almost all his pronouncements regarding social welfare. He placed man superior to society and so he was opposed to the system which brought about moral dilapidation of the Indian society. When Gandhi became a part of the Indian freedom struggle, he realised that not only the political freedom was the foremost requirement but

also the social awakening and upliftment of the society was equally important for complete freedom.

Sarvodaya was one of the pillars of Gandhi's philosophy. It was concerned with Gandhian Socialism. Gandhi looked at social welfare in his own unique way for he never equated happiness with economic prosperity and physical pleasure alone. In the view of Gandhi, sarvodaya may be considered the goal, he set for humanity in general and India in particular. Gandhi viewed a classless society with welfare of all sections of people; the poor, the downtrodden, the exploited and the least.

The constructive programme may be called construction of *poorna swaraj* on the foundations of truth and non-violence. Constructive programme consisted of several apparently independent, loosely attached activities but in truth it was tied together by a paradigm which lead to a much need reformation. With the process and design of the programme ever expanding and evolving it had great potential for a better life of the Indian citizens.

Gandhi did not consider social reconstruction and welfare as an enterprise for helping the downtrodden members of the society out of doing charity for them but as the emergence of people through an individual and social order, towards a healthy and laurel society.

In this section the nuances of sarvodaya and the constructive programme have been brought into consideration.

(a) Constructive Programme

“All-embracing constructive work evokes the energy of all the units of the millions.”

(*Harijan*, 1.2.1948, CWMG, Vol.98, P. 306)

To achieve swaraj, Gandhi was of the view that social and economic freedom had immense significance along with political freedom from the colonial rule. To achieve this freedom and to cater to the minimum needs of the society, Gandhi gave a constructive programme, which was an integral and positive aspect of his philosophy of swaraj. This was an aspiration to accomplish economic self sufficiency in keeping with the spirit of swadeshi in the masses and thus mobilize them to achieve *poorna swaraj* or complete independence by truthful and non-violent means. For him it was essential for every citizen to participate in the making of a society through this constructive programme. Gandhi said:

“The true building up of Swaraj consists in the millions of India wholeheartedly working the constructive programme. Without it the whole nation cannot rise from its age-long torpor. Whether the British remain or not it is our duty always to wipe out unemployment, to bridge the gulf between rich and poor, to banish communal strife, to exorcise the demon of untouchability, to reform dacoits and save the people from them. If crores of people do not take a living interest in this nation-building work, freedom must

remain a dream and unattainable by either nonviolence or violence.”¹

Gandhi's programme was intended towards the sovereignty of every unit of the nation, without discrimination of caste, creed, sex or religion. Gandhi's vision of constructive programme consisted of the practice and engagement of the entire masses in the freedom struggle.

To Gandhi the curriculum of the constructive programme would be like a rehearsal for a soldier in peace time. Gandhi also used this programme to sustain the morale of the people in the space between struggles. One primary motive was to gear up and involve a large number of people to participate in the constructive programmes and through that prepare satyagrahis who would be ready to participate in the freedom struggle. It also worked towards further strengthening those who had already been participants. Thus it had the advantage of involving a larger number of people for intellectual work requires relatively few persons but constructive work could involve millions.

A major population of India lived in the villages but the national movement for freedom was limited to the urban middle classes. In order to involve the entire nation into the freedom movement, Gandhi expanded the movement to the villages to strengthen and give a new meaning to the movement. It was the twin effect of the political agitation and village reconstruction that brought about a revolutionary change in the outlook of people. These series of programmes were designed for rural India. Gandhi felt that more than three-fourths of the population belongs to villages and if they

are immobilized, *poorna swaraj* would not become a possibility. He saw the possibility of stimulating the poorest and deprived sections along constructive and beneficial lines with the practice of social democracy and self-reliance, which require character, and not capital. The constructive programme was designed to ensure the realisation of opportunities that would secure modest achievements. With truth and non-violence at the heart of it, Gandhi built a new structure brick by brick. The constructive programme was geared towards slowly building upon every achievement, leaving the future open to further expansion. Gandhi said:

“The constructive programme may otherwise and more fittingly be called construction of *poorna swaraj* or complete independence by truthful and non-violent means.”²

Constructive programme was launched for the first time during the Non-Cooperation Movement. During the Initial stages of the freedom struggle Gandhi focused on three items; propagation of khadi and other village industries, hindu-muslim unity and rural reconstruction. By the time the struggle against the colonial power moved into the decisive phase, by 1940s, his constructive agenda held thirteen items. On the eve of independence, the programme expanded itself to work on eighteen items, broadly classified into three categories. The first category comprised of economic regeneration, which included khadi, village industry, economic equality, improvements in living and work conditions of kisan and labourers. The second category was organised around social reformation with the purpose of removal of

untouchability, prohibition, upliftment of women and *adivasis*, education in health and hygiene, and care for lepers. The third category was directed towards nation character building which dealt with communal unity, village sanitation, basic education, adult education, recognition to provincial languages and creation of a national language. In this way he touched every aspect of citizens lives. These programmes were not meant to be revolutionary in nature but worked to gain a complete reformation moving beyond all shortcomings. It is the charisma of Gandhi that kept thousands of workers and millions of people under his trust worthy influence eager to participate in the constructive programme chalked out by him. These curriculum embraced all sections of the Indian society down to Gandhi's *daridranarayan*. It had no prefixed paradigm which kept the possibility of modifying the syllabus continuously in accordance with the changing requirements, thus keeping it free from being fixed. Gandhi said that:

"I am not yet able to say where the limits of the constructive programme lie... In the constructive programme we have all-round development."³

Despite a large following of the curriculum, Gandhi had to face severe criticism for several top leaders intended to concentrate only on political freedom first, and were of the opinion that it was a waste of energy to involve other matters. Gandhi retorted:

"I see that there is a tendency to believe that these programmes (political and constructive) are mutually exclusive....But really there is no such opposition. I had

thought that it was clear by now to every worker that there was no absolute division between the so called Constructive Programme. In our method of work there are no water-tight compartments.”⁴

Constructive programme consisted of several apparently independent loosely attached activities but in truth it was tied together by a paradigm which lead to a much need reformation. With the process and design of the programme ever expanding and evolving it had great potential for a better life of the Indian citizens. After Gandhi's death, cow protection, nature-cure, bhoodan, gramdan and shanty sena were also added to the list by his disciples and followers to strengthen the movement.

Communal Unity:

One of the central features of Gandhian constructive programme was hindu-muslim unity or rather communal unity. Unity for Gandhi meant not just harmony between the two communities, but between all fellow Indians who treat India as their own homeland. Gandhi laid greater emphasis on bringing the two major communities together for without that India would not be able to achieve swaraj in its true sense. To him:

“India, by finding true independence and self-expression through Hindu-Muslim unity and through non-violent means, i.e., unadulterated self-sacrifice, can point a way out of the prevailing darkness.”⁵

Gandhi did not adopt the western model of secularism where religion does not influence public life, unlike India where religion plays a major role in

shaping the way of life. He wanted religion to serve on moral grounds urging both hindus and muslims to differentiate between true religion and irrelevant traditions, rituals and dogmas. Gandhi was of the view that there are several commonalities among the two communities and these common traits could be instrumental in bringing them close to each other. For Gandhi:

“Hindu-Muslim unity consists in our having a common purpose, a common goal and common sorrows. It is best promoted by co-operating to reach the common goal, by sharing of one another's sorrows and by mutual toleration.”⁶

Basically muslims of India under the influence of the Muslim League regarded Indian National Congress as biased in favour of hindus and so the muslims became alienated from congress and a divide appeared between the two major communities of the nation. Gandhi tried to bring hindus and muslims together through this programme by respecting the sentiments of the muslims with regard to the Khilafat Movement. He strongly supported the cause of the muslims and left no effort undone to see that their religious sentiments were not injured by the severe British attitude towards the Caliph. This gesture of Gandhi to garner support for the cause of muslims brought confidence in the muslim community towards him. Gandhi mentioned:

“That was the time when Hindus and Muslims for the time forgot all their differences. The Ali Brothers and I used to go all over the country together like blood-brothers. We spoke with one voice and delivered the

message of Hindu-Muslim unity and Swaraj to the masses.”⁷

Amongst the many causes of conflict between the hindus and muslims Gandhi isolated two major causes of abrasion. In the booklet on constructive programme he speaks of cow protection as a national problem and he appealed to the Muslims to refrain voluntarily from cow slaughter to show respect to the sentiments of their hindu brothers. Likewise he appealed to the hindus to refrain from performing *aarti* before the mosques at the time of prayers. He appealed to both the communities to refrain from actions that troubled any one of the community and respect their sentiments. Even after independence he kept appealing for unity between both the communities both in India and newly formed Pakistan. He said:

“My one aim with respect to the Hindu-Muslim question is that the solution will be complete only when the minority, whether in the Indian Union or Pakistan, feels perfectly safe.”⁸

Gandhi was a man of great optimism. He was confident that with the advent of the freedom of India both the communities would unite. This was reflected in his writing in *Young India* as he writes:

“I have not a shadow of a doubt that the iceberg of communal differences will melt under the warmth of the sun of freedom.”⁹

The curriculum given by Gandhi gained success and through his untiring efforts India became a secular state with the Constitution of India providing equal footing to every religion.

Untouchability:

Untouchability was widely prevalent in the society vitiating the very fabric of human relationships. A section of the society had become subject to untold suffering and callous discrimination on account of their caste. Gandhi considered this an unforgivable crime and a major hindrance in the progress of the nation. For this reason Gandhi included this problem in his constructive programme. Untouchability meant the disgrace a person felt by the mere touch of another person on account of his being born in a particular family or clan. The hindu society was basically a caste based society. This comprised of the *varnashrama* system which was initially divided on the basis of the profession a person kept; thus *brahmins* acquired the top position in the hierarchy of castes then, *kshatriyas* after which were placed *vaishyas*. The *shudras* occupied the lowest place in the hierarchy. Originally, this division was based on the occupation of the person and was quite flexible with no barriers blocking movement from one *varna* into another. Later this division was transforms into a rigid caste system which was responsible for treating a segment of the society as untouchables. Untouchability was not acceptable to Gandhi in any way and he fought against it. He wrote:

“Untouchability is not only not a part and parcel of Hinduism, but a plague, which it is the bounden duty of every Hindu to combat. It has received religious sanction in India, and reduced lakhs and crores of human beings to a state bordering on slavery.”¹⁰

Several personalities like Mahavira and Buddha in the past, Gandhi, Ambedkar, Jyotiba Phule and many more made great efforts to weed out this inequality. Gandhi tackled it firmly. In Gandhi's view the rigidity infused in the caste system was solely responsible for the problem of untouchability in India. Gandhi advocated the *varna* system and was of the firm belief that there was a sense in the age old law of *varna* but did not agree with the belief that one *varna* is higher than the other, which in turn violates the equality between all people. He presented this thought quite clearly in *Young India*, as:

“Varnashrama Dharma defines man's mission on this earth. He is born day after day to explore avenues for amassing riches and to explore different means of livelihood; on the contrary, man is born in order that he may utilize every atom of his energy for the purpose of knowing his Maker. It restricts him therefore for the purpose of holding body and soul together to the occupation of his forefathers. That and nothing more or nothing less is Varnashrama Dharma.”¹¹

Not only in hinduism but some other communities like Muslims were also not free from an unequal treatment. This reflects in Gandhi's view that:

“Hinduism has sinned in giving sanction to untouchability. It has degraded us, made us pariahs. Even the Mussalman have caught the sinful contagion from us.”¹²

Gandhi had observed inhuman behaviour against untouchables from the early days of his life. He felt deep indignation when told by his mother, not to touch a boy from a lower cast. Gandhi saw the misery of the untouchables all

over the country and felt the pain and injury of the person belonging to that caste. It forced Gandhi to act in such a way so as to bring an end to this injustice. The person born in a lower caste was not allowed to touch or stand in the way of the people of higher castes. They were not allowed to drink out of the well of the village, thus forced to use contaminated water of the open dirty ponds. Entry to temples was also denied to untouchables, without consideration that in God's eyes all are equal. This caste was supposed to do lowly work such as scavenging, removal of debris of dead animals and such activities that are treated unclean or impure to others. Strangely enough they were made to clean the filth of the upper castes because they were of lower castes and then considered to be untouchable because they had to do work that was unclean.

Gandhi was deeply saddened by the inhuman treatment meted out to people belonging to lower *varna* and the ensuing exploitation. He considered this as an ugly black mark on the face of hinduism. He took steps towards removing untouchability in a very organised way. Removal of untouchability to him meant breaking down the barriers of inequality and treating the other with love and respect irrespective of his *varna*. The biggest mission of his life was to demolish the hierarchy observed by the people of India. Gandhi gave the name *harijan* to the untouchables, which meant people of God. He did this to eliminate the very idea of untouchability. Kusum Lata Chadda said:

“The term has not been coined with a view to perpetuating the separate identity of Harijan....The term untouchable savours of contempt... as untouchables have a distinct identity we must have a name by which to call

them...Let us pray that this separateness may be done away with so that all of us may become fit to be called 'Harijan' - men of God.”¹³

Gandhi knew that the word *harijan* alone would not be enough to change the status of the untouchables, but by using the name *harijan*, he intended to emphasis on the equality of all the citizens before the law and the society. Apart from that he wished to prove that all people are born equal in the eyes of God. The word *dalit* was never acceptable to Gandhi and he considered it inadequate.

The divide between the higher castes and the so called untouchables was a major cause for concern for Gandhi also, because the British took advantage of this by their policy of divide and rule which in turn became an obstacle in the realisation of swaraj. He said:

“Swaraj is a meaningless term, if we desire to keep a fifth of India under perpetual subjection, and deliberately deny to them the fruits of national culture. We are seeking the aid of God in this great purification movement, but we deny to the most deserving among His creatures the rights of humanity. Inhuman ourselves, we may not plead before the Throne for deliverance from the inhumanity of others.”¹⁴

Gandhi fought relentlessly for the cause of this downtrodden section of the society, throughout his life. He could feel the gloom and misery of this section and wanted to live their life and to share their pain. He wrote:

“I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and the affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition.”¹⁵

So deeply upset was Gandhi with the injustice of the entire system which had stripped one section of the society of all its dignity and made the other into tyrants that in desperation he wrote:

“If untouchability lives, Hinduism must die.”¹⁶

Emancipation of Women:

One of the most serious issues faced by the Indian society was the extremely poor status of women. In ancient times the situation was not so bad. The deterioration set in from the medieval period onwards. Earlier in nineteenth century, reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Brahma Samajists had started working for the upliftment in the status of women for not only were they treated with contempt but uniformly lived as second citizens of the nation. The reformists struggled hard to get rid of the cruel and insensitive rituals, like *sati pratha*, widow remarriage, child marriage etc. However in trying to save women from a cruel destiny they did not involve the participation of women encouraging them to fight themselves for justice and the rights they deserved. Their approach remained to be patronizing. Later in the twentieth century there was observed a notable progress in this regard. Gandhi became the torch bearer for the reforms in women's emancipation. Gandhi was of the view that if the nation was to attain true and *poorna swaraj*,

women empowerment was essential. To him, a woman is neither a play-thing in the hands of man or an object to be used but an individual but deserves to be free and equal to her male counterparts and an architect of her own destiny. Gandhi always advocated the equal status of women in every aspect in the society, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. Gandhi said:

“Woman will have to determine with authority what she needs. My own opinion is that, just as fundamentally man and woman are one, their problem must be one in essence. The soul in both is the same. The two live the same life, have the same feelings. Each is a complement of the other. The one cannot live without the other’s active help. But somehow or other man has dominated woman from ages past, and so woman has developed an inferiority complex. She has believed in the truth of man’s interested teaching that she is inferior to him. But the seers among men have recognized her equal status.”¹⁷

A woman is not objects to be handled by men nor is she any inferior to them. Gandhi considered women as equal partners in almost every walk of life, however he felt that women need not indiscriminately compete in each area but select their work and profession in keeping with their capabilities and inclinations. He also encourage bread labour not only for men but for women too. As he believed that men and women are equal but not identical, so their field of work should coincide with their uniqueness. He wrote:

“They (man and woman) are a peerless pair being supplementary to one another; each helps the other so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be

conceived; and therefore, it follows as a necessary corollary from these facts that anything that will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of both.”¹⁸

He further emphasised the importance of family and the essential role assumed by the women both as a mother and wife, and the care given to the entire household thereby providing sustainability and stability to the society. He said:

“The duty of motherhood, which the vast majority of women will always undertake, requires qualities which man need not possess. She is passive, he is active. She is essentially mistress of the house. He is the bread-winner, she is the keeper and distributor of the bread. She is the caretaker in every sense of the term....Without her care the race must become extinct.”¹⁹

Gandhi was absolutely against the practice of *purdah* as for him it was an extremely humiliating custom. It saddened Gandhi to watch women deprived of freedom so much so that even a breath of fresh air was not possible for them. Even her sexuality was completely appropriated by the man. On *purdah* he questioned the man of the society that:

“Why is there all this morbid anxiety about female purity? Have women any say in the matter of male purity? We hear nothing of women’s anxiety about men’s chastity. Why should men arrogate to themselves the right to regulate female purity? It cannot be superimposed from without. It is a matter of evolution from within and, therefore of individual self effort.”²⁰

Yet another evil responsible for the despairing situation of women was the practice of dowry where a woman is totally reduced to the status of objecthood. Gandhi appealed to the young men and women to come together in large numbers for the creation of a strong public opinion that would condemn and completely abolish the dowry system. Gandhi tried his best to work for all those aspects of the life of women that would facilitate their emancipation, whether it was marriage, widow remarriage, divorce, prostitution etc.

Gandhi encouraged women to participate in the freedom struggle. Thus encouraging her to realise her inherent potentiality. According to Gandhi women are the icon of ahimsa and an incarnation of non-violence, thus best suited for the non-violent struggle for independence. According to Gandhi:

“My contribution to the great problem lies in my presenting for acceptance truth and ahimsa in every walk of life, whether for individuals or nations. I have hugged the hope that in this woman will be the unquestioned leader and, having thus found her place in human evolution, she will shed her inferiority complex.”²¹

Under the inspiration of Gandhi, women initiated the movement from their homes, following and educating their family about the importance and utility of non-violence thus transforming it into a mass movement. Women equally participated in organising public meetings, encouraging countrymen to wear khadi and distributing literature on acquiring freedom, house to house. They actively took steps in picketing shops of liquor and foreign goods, and came forward to face the atrocities inflicted by the police officers and were not

scared to be imprisoned. Gandhi inspired women to decide their own fate, and thus change the destiny that is chalked out for them by the society at large. Through their fearless and active participation in the struggle for independence and their refusal to give in to injustice women, under the influence of Gandhi's message, proved that they possessed great conviction and strength, and the capability to make political decisions as well. Gandhi believed that:

“Women must have votes and an equal legal status. But the problem does not end there. It only commences at the point where women begin to affect the political deliberations of the nation.”²²

Though still lacking in many ways the country redeemed its pledge after the independence and tried to give equal rights and dignity to women in nearly all the domains, be it political, economic or legal.

Basic and Adult Education:

The word education literally translated as drawing out means to develop inert talent. Education is a means to develop capabilities and acts towards materializing potentialities. The foundation of the education system is basic education and for a nation to progress and prosper in its true sense, basic education happens to be most vital. In Gandhi's time there was no specified system of education especially basic education in India. Gandhi chalked out a system of education and named it *nai taleem*, which meant new education. Gandhi deeply loved the children of the country and was concerned about their education. To him, education meant an all round development of the child, for literacy in itself is no education but simply a means to learning. Education goes

beyond that for it is comprehensive in its approach and helps in the governance of the attitude one has about one's very existence and the rest of the world.

When Gandhi returned from South Africa, he observed the flaws in the education system practiced in India. There was a complete negligence on the part of the colonial government towards any education policy that could benefit Indians. He argued that the school syllabus based on Macaulay's system, was inappropriate to the Indian context, for the medium of education was English. This was a strategy to alienate the children from the culture and the language of their motherland and live under the subservience of British. In Gandhi's opinion basic education should include all children and should not be imparted with a foreign medium of instruction such as English but in the vernacular languages to benefit all classes. He gave great importance to vocational guidance for such training would help them earn a living. He said:

“The Introduction of manual training will serve a double purpose in a poor country like ours. It will pay for the educations of our children and teach them an occupation on which they can fall back... Such a system must make our children self-reliant.”²³

His ideas of basic education was meant to benefit children from rural India. Gandhi goes on to say:

“This education is meant to transform village children into model villagers. It is principally designed for them. The inspiration for it has come from the villages... Basic education links the children, whether of the cities or the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India.”²⁴

He also advocated free and mandatory primary education up to the age of seven. He was of the view that this would be quite an effective method of educating children of large sections of our country. Here again he stressed the need of relevant education which is not purely based on abstract theories. To him,

“I am a firm believer in the principle of free and compulsory Primary Education for India. I also hold that we shall realise this only by teaching the children a useful vocation and utilizing it as a means for cultivating their mental, physical and spiritual faculties.”²⁵

For Gandhi education was a means to character building. Through this an educated person becomes an ideal. An education in moral values, moral training are of great help and so it should be included in the curriculum. Gandhi gives his views in this regards as:

“I have never been able to make a fetish of literary training. My experience has proved to my satisfaction that literary training by itself adds not an inch to one's moral height and that character-building is independent of literary training.”²⁶

Gandhi wished that education should reach to all children belonging to every section of the society, living in any part of the country. And as the underprivileged rural masses were his prime concern he formulated the policies with the weaker sections in mind and not the elite in the forefront. He also suggested that a balance between mental and manual work should be carefully

designed, thus catering to the education of the entire being; mind, body and spirit.

Adult education means educating the people who were deprived of education in their childhood. As education can be acquired at any time in life and which in turn can change the mindset of the person Gandhi advocated education for the adults. He felt it would help them in an enhanced understanding of the problems faced by India. He elaborated as:

“If I had charge of adult education, I should begin with opening the minds of the adult pupils to the greatness and vastness of their country...The villagers know nothing of foreign rule and its evils... They do not know how to get rid of it. They do not know that the foreigner's presence is due to their own weaknesses and their ignorance of the power they possess to rid themselves of the foreign rule. My adult education means, therefore, first, true political education of the adult by word of mouth. Seeing that this will be mapped out, it can be given without fear. I imagine that it is too late in the day for authority to interfere with this type of education... Side by side with the education by the mouth will be the literary education. This is itself a specialty.”²⁷

Either adult education was totally neglected or it was confined to simply reading out and writing. Gandhi appealed to fellow congressmen, who were teachers, to educate at least one adult illiterate, so that it is one step forward towards attaining swaraj.

Prohibition:

Any intake by the body which is counter-productive for the sustenance of the human body should be prohibited, in particular if the person gets addicted to it. Intoxication in any form i.e. liquor, opium, ganja, tobacco and sometimes even milder stimulants, are often responsible for adversely affecting the health. Gandhi took it upon himself to create awareness and dissuade people to succumb to addiction, for deterioration of their health would not only take away from them but also the nation that was in need for healthy individuals; both in body and spirit to fight for its independence. He advocated the prohibition of things which were injurious to health in any form. On this issue, he had very stern views. According to him:

“If we are to reach our goal through non-violent effort, we may not leave to the future government the fate of lakhs of men and women who are labouring under the curse of intoxicants and narcotics. Medical men can make a most effective contribution towards the removal of this evil. They have to discover ways of weaning the drunkard and the opium addict from the curse.”²⁸

As regards cigarettes and cigars he was of the opinion that they should be avoided whether they are of foreign or indigenous origin for the same reason. He said:

“Cigarette smoking is like an opiate and the cigars that you smoke have a touch of opium about them. They get to your nerves and you cannot leave them afterwards.”²⁹

In India the consumption of tobacco was very widespread both between men and women and Gandhi did his best to discourage it. Gandhi felt the consumption of liquor to be the source of all the evils, such as thieving, prostitution and other such crimes. Apart from that intoxication created a loss of human dignity and a complete disregard for human values. He had great sympathy for the families of men given to drinking. The prohibition on drinking was especially devised for the labour section of the society for the reason that their wages would all be consumed in buying liquor and the family would go hungry.

Gandhi wanted India to be free from the use of drinks and drugs, even if it were to be consumed in a customary manner for celebrations etc. He wrote:

“Nothing but ruin stares a nation in the face that is a prey to the drink habit. History records that empires have been destroyed through the habit... This monstrous evil was undoubtedly one of the contributory factors in the fall of Rome.”³⁰

Unlike professing self-restraint to the people against the use of liquor Gandhi proposed that a law should be passed to completely put an end to this malaise.

He wrote:

“If I was appointed dictator for one hour for all India, the first thing I would do would be to close without compensation all the liquor shops.”³¹

He was also of the opinion that complete prohibition should also be extended to other intoxicants as well such as bhang, opium, ganja and tobacco in any form from the state legislature. He appealed to the congress to place

prohibition on their agenda, without heeding for the financial losses due to the prohibition.

Khadi and other Village Industries:

Khadi is the central core of the constructive programme. It means handspun and hand woven cloth. The music of the spinning wheel weaving khadi was very soothing for to Gandhi. He started the khadi movement in 1918, as a relief programme for the people of rural India. He felt as if the entire nation was being weaved together when the fellow congressmen and others weaved khadi on the spinning wheel. In Gandhi's views khadi was symbolic of the unity of the nation and a gradual process of political and spiritual transformation. Gandhi writes:

“Khadi to me is the symbol of unity of Indian humanity, of its economic freedom and equality and, therefore, ultimately, in the poetic expression of Jawaharlal Nehru, “the livery of India's freedom.”³²

Gandhi's insistence on the manufacture and use of khadi was based on the fact that the poorest could afford it but more pertinently it had become a symbol of patriotism for him. In discontinuing the use of foreign cloth and preferring khadi Gandhi perceived an economic independence for the country. To him,

“...Khadi must be taken with all its implications. It means a wholesale swadeshi mentality, a determination to find all the necessities of life in India and that too through the labour and intellect of the villagers.”³³

For Gandhi khadi was not merely the material for an attire but a message of patriotism and simplicity to the colonial government. It was the thread of swaraj for him. He said:

“If we have the khadi spirit in us we should serve ourselves with simplicity in every walk of life. khadi spirit means illimitable patience. For those who know anything of the production of khaddar know how patiently those spinners and the weavers have to toil even so must we have patience while spinning 'the thread of Swaraj'... khadi spirit means fellow-feeling with every living being on earth. It means the complete renunciation of everything that is likely to harm our fellow creatures, ... If khadi is asked for in the khadi spirit that I have endeavoured to describe to you, khadi has illimitable capacities and it would outstand every other article that you see in India today.”³⁴

The *charkha* became a corollary to the progress of the nation, a symbol of peace and non-violence and became a means to awaken the nation. It was also the means for erasing the differences between the rich and the poor. In the views of Gandhi:

“The message of the spinning-wheel is much wider than its circumference. Its message is one of simplicity, service of mankind, living so as not to hurt others, creating an indissoluble bond between the rich and the poor, capital and labour, the prince and the peasant. That larger message is naturally for all.”³⁵

The manufacture of khadi also encouraged the emergence of many other cottage industries that would produce the raw products essential for the production of khadi. Thus several village industries cropped up providing economic freedom and means of sustenance to the poverty stricken village people. Gandhi observed:

“Khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support khadi in return for the heat and the sustenance they derive from it. Without it, the other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, without the revival of other industries, khadi could not make further progress. For villagers to be able to occupy their spare time profitably, the village life must be touched at all points.”³⁶

Gandhi's economics opposed the concentration of economic sources by introducing economic decentralization of power at various levels. He believed that such a concentration might become instrumental in the creation of a capitalist class, which encourages exploitation. Gandhi advocated decentralization of power, which would become possible by setting up small scale and cottage industries for the development of rural areas. This in turn would provide a dignified life and the means to fulfill the necessities of the life of the poor and unemployed people belonging to villages.

Provincial and National Languages:

India is a country of a rich and diverse culture. The existence of several living language was a manifestation of India's diversity. The culture of the

province would not be able to survive, if the language of that province would be ignored. For achieving swaraj, provincial languages had a vital role. During the freedom struggle, it became clear that control on the vernacular language, held by the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, made a great differences to the freedom of expression. Gandhi professed the importance of the role of vernacular languages for the purposes of administration and education during the 1920s. He said that giving preference to the english language as the medium of instruction over the vernacular languages of the nation, would only be able to educate a section of the elite or the higher classes but not to the common people of the country. He supported the use of the mother tongue for imparting education. He said:

“I have no doubt whatsoever that, if those who have the education of the youth in their hands will but make up their minds, they will discover that the mother tongue is as natural for the development of man's mind as mother's milk is for the development of the infant's body. How can it be otherwise? The babe takes its first lesson from its mother. I, therefore, regard it as a sin against the motherland to inflict upon her children a tongue other than their mother's for their mental development.”³⁷

However, he recommended the usage of english as the language for education in science and technology. He did not want english languages to be banished with the British raj but to be put to used for international speech, commerce and diplomacy. In his words:

“My plea is for banishing English as a cultural usurper as we successfully banished the political rule of the English usurper. The rich English language will ever retain its natural place as the international speech of commerce and diplomacy.”³⁸

Now from the provincial languages there needed to be a language that met the criteria for the *Lingua Franca* or the national language. As English was disapproved by most of the Indian leaders including Gandhi, there was only one language i.e. *hindustani*, which was the language of the masses. This was the language known to a large number of countrymen. Hindustani was spoken by both *hindus* and *muslims*. Congress passed its resolution in 1925 at Cawnpore, proposing it as the national language. He wrote in his book *Hind Swaraj* that:

“A universal language for India should be Hindi, with the option of writing it in Persian or Nagari characters. In order that the Hindus and the Mohammedans may have closer relations, it is necessary to know both the characters. And, if we can do this, we can drive the English language out of the field in a short time.”³⁹

Hindustani then became the language of the nation with scripting in *Devnagiri* or Persian.

He was also of the opinion that these provincial languages exist side by side with the national language. And there should not be frictions between them. In Gandhi's words:

“The re-distribution of provinces on a linguistic basis is necessary if provincial languages are to grow to their full

height. Hindustani is to be the lingua franca – Rashtra Bhasha-of India, but it cannot take the place of the provincial tongues. It cannot be the medium of instruction in the provinces-much less English. Its function is to make them realise their organic relationship with India.”⁴⁰

Economic Equality:

Economic equality was one of the main aims of the economic policy of Gandhi. Gandhi was of the view that the economic disparities existing between the rich and poor would be a great hindrance in the way of attaining true and *poorna swaraj*. By economic equality, Gandhi meant that each person whether rich or poor should have sufficiency in keeping with his needs. He cited an example that an elephant needs more food than an ant, but this is not indicative of inequality between the two. Inequality comes when the contrast between the rich and poor keeps growing with time, with the rich becoming richer and poor, poorer still. It would be an ideal situation when each person would get an equal share and enjoy complete equality. However there should be in the least a provision to fulfill at least the minimum requirements; food, shelter, education and medical relief. He said:

“My idea of society is that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunities, all have not the same capacity. It is, in the nature of things, impossible. For instance, all cannot have the same height, or colour or degree of intelligence, etc.; therefore, in the nature of things, some will have ability to earn more and others less.”⁴¹

Gandhi emphasised that economic equality would be possible only through ethical and non-violent means. Further he said that the vision of a non-violent nation would never become a reality unless the divide between the rich and poor ended. In his view:

“Economic equality is the master key to non-violent independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the leveling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and a leveling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other.”⁴²

Gandhi wanted to bring economic equality only through non-violent means as opposed to a violent revolution suggested by communism. His idea of trusteeship was a method of remove economic disparity. The superfluous wealth of the rich was not suppose to belong to him but made available to the poor willingly and with love for them. His basic concern was that in the face of economic inequality the dream of swaraj would never be fulfilled. He wrote:

“Today there is gross economic inequality. The basis of socialism is economic equality. There can be no Ramarajya in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat.”⁴³

Kisan:

Since three quarters of the Indian population lived and worked as farmers in the villages under extremely adverse conditions, Gandhi was deeply concerned. His first satyagrah in Champaran was for the cause of the poor

farmers. For the non-violent struggle for India's independence it was important that it take the shape of a mass movement. Gandhi motivated the people living in the villages by invoking political consciousness and urging them to participate in the freedom movement to gain *poorna swaraj*. For Gandhi:

“If Swaraj is attained by the effort of the whole people, as it must be under nonviolence, the Kisans must come into their own and have the uppermost voice.”⁴⁴

With over eighty crore hands supporting and contributing to the struggle for *poorna swaraj* the movement gained great strength. For the farmers to be self-reliant and strong Gandhi stressed on the need to educate them irrespective of their age, caste, class and gender.

Gandhi included landless labourers also under the category of kisan and urged for them to be able to earn enough to afford a comfortable and respectable living for themselves and their families. Landless farmers were forced into subservience of the land lords to earn a living. Gandhi tried hard to bring an end to the deprivation under which endless lives were lived, and impressed upon the land lords to mitigate the situation by becoming trustees of the poor people. Gandhi tried to put a system in place that would bring financial stability into the lives of the peasants and also open the choice of opting for or refusing manual labour. Gandhi wrote in this regard as:

“I do not want the power of a Hitler, I want the power of a free peasant...I want to be a kisan and a labourer by choice, and when I can make him also a kisan and a labourer by choice, I can also enable him to throw off the

shackles that keep him bound today and that compel him to do the master's bidding.”⁴⁵

Adivasi:

The tribals, better known as adivasis, were a group of aboriginals living in clusters in different parts of the country. They followed their own tradition and customs, living in near isolation with no contact with the outside world. These were groups that could be characterised by their clan based system of kinship. They comprised of nearly 7% of the total population. Gandhi included adivasis in his constructive programme. As the adivasis were backward in nearly every aspect with a civilization and culture unique to themselves, they stayed confined in their own world but Gandhi felt this did not mean that they did not have the capacity to contribute to the progress of the country. There were many adivasi movements held in support of the cause of the countrymen. Gandhi supported their movements such as the Bardoli movement in South Gujarat, Bhil and Tejawat movement and many more. Gandhi guided their movements often by participating in them and at other times through his writings and speeches. It was his insistence that irrespective of endless differences that existed between the people of this country they needed to be tied together- united and supportive of each other. He said:

"Our country is so vast and the races so varied that the best of us cannot know all there is to know of men and their condition. As one discovers this for oneself, one realises how difficult it is to make good our claim to be one nation, unless every unit has a living consciousness of being one with every other." ⁴⁶

Gandhi started Adim Sevak Sangh in 1930 to ensure the contribution of the adivasis in the freedom struggle and to channelise their strength in building of the nations. With deepest regard for the work done by the Sangh for the welfare of adivasis Gandhi wrote in that:

"Truly, 'the harvest is rich but the labourers few.' Who can deny that all such service is not merely humanitarian but solidly national and brings us nearer to true independence?"⁴⁷

Conclusion:

Gandhi believed that resolving economic problems would contribute to the moral well-being of the countrymen and for this reason he devised the constructive programme as a means to bring consolidation and emancipation in the lives of the people of India which is innovative and creative in nature. He tried to achieve this set of programmes on the grounds of the principle of cooperation, mutual aid, self reliance and moral action in the true spirit of non-violence. As a blanket application of the programme was not in order Gandhi suggested that for each village the programme should be carried out according to its unique conditions, decentralization being a vital principle of the constructive programme.

According to Gandhi, the constructive programme was a truthful and non-violent way of achieving *poorna swaraj*. These curriculums granted significant livelihood for the people of the nation, as well as cohesiveness and psychological well-being. Gandhi insisted on a complete implementation of the

programme for if applied piecemeal it would not be able to achieve the projected results.

(b) Sarvodaya

“Democracy must in essence, therefore, mean the act and science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of the people in the service of the common good of all.”

(*Harijan*, 20-5-1939, CWMG, Vol.75, P.175-176)

The meaning of welfare in the Oxford dictionary is “Statutory procedure or social effort designed to promote the basic physical and material well-being of people in need.”¹ By and large the philosophy of welfare or development, has been restricted to the poor. Development or welfare schemes are formulated for the lower strata of the society of a country. Karl Gunnar Myrdal, Swedish Nobel Laureate, economist, sociologist, and politician, defines development as:

“By development I mean the movement upward of the entire social system, and I believe this is the only logically tenable definition. The social system endorses besides the so-called economic factors.... the distribution of power in society; and more generally economic, social and political stratification.”²

Development is neither a continuous nor a uniform process for the idea of an overall development are rooted in the need to establish and deliver the requirements of human dignity, equality, liberty, social justice and the like.

These concepts are indivisible. Development based on these principles can be defined as a process that aims at achieving an integrated, balanced and unified development of the society and ultimately welfare and development of all.

The world has witnessed propagation and implementation of various socio-political and socio-economic ideologies; capitalists, socialist and communist in the twentieth century. But sarvodaya is undoubtedly, superior and complete in all respects. Its centrality lies in its overall vision of providing the human mind an orientation to bring about structural alterations in the society. Sarvodaya is a combination of two words *sarva* and *udaya*. Sarvodaya etymologically means the complete awakening of all in the society. *Sarva* in the compound word connotes totality or a complete whole and *udaya* signifies upliftment or an all around progress. The complete awakening of every single individual in the society in body, mind, intellect and spirit to his maximum potentiality is called sarvodaya. It also means 'good of all', 'service to all' and 'welfare of all'. Its objective is the socio-economic development of all. Its basis is commonness, i.e., what is done not for any particular individual or group but for all.

Sarvodaya is concerned with Gandhian socialism. Gandhi looked at social welfare in his own unique way. As early as 1894, when he was just 25 years old, he wanted to help his compatriots in South Africa by saving them from blatant and crushing racial discrimination. Gandhi never equated happiness with economic prosperity and physical pleasure alone. Sarvodaya

was one of the pillars of Gandhi's philosophy. The dynamics of sarvodaya assumes a process that begins with the most underprivileged in the society. In the view of Gandhi, sarvodaya may be considered the goal, he set for humanity in general and India in particular. Gandhi viewed a classless society with welfare of all sections of people; the poor, the downtrodden, the exploited and the least. His ideal of sarvodaya was social upliftment, economic liberation and moral revitalization of all. Gandhi considered this ideal as the only real dignified human doctrine that held the greatest good of all. He had envisioned development inclusive of moral, ethical and spiritual values rather than the application of western economic parameters alone. Gandhi struggled hard to establish a democratic state and a new social order on principles of truth and non-violence with sarvodaya as his aim. His methods of working towards this goal were different from those of many other leaders and social reformers. He took an integrated view of life and disapproved of breaking up an individual's life into separate segments. He viewed the individual not as an independent and unconnected entity but as a constituent unit of society.

Gandhi's original use of the term sarvodaya dates back to the year 1904. In translating into Gujarati Ruskin's *Unto this Last*, the book that he acknowledge as exerting the most radical and revolutionary influence on his life and philosophy, he first used the term sarvodaya. The title of the book when translated into Gujarati was *Sarvodaya* or the welfare of all, but as a matter of fact the idea of welfare of all, was already there in his mind even before he read this book. Gandhi thought that the philosophy of *Unto this Last*

would be quite relevant to the Indian context. In one of his articles on Ruskin he wrote that:

“What Ruskin wrote for his countrymen, the British, is a thousand times more applicable to Indians? New ideas are spreading in India. The advent of a new spirit among the young who have received western education is of course to be welcomed. But the outcome will be beneficial only if that spirit is channelized properly.”³

According to Gandhi Ruskin's book had three central lessons for him. First, the good of the individual is contained in the good for all. Secondly, a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work. And lastly, a life of labour, i.e., life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is a life worth living. Ruskin and Gandhi both, were earnestly concerned with the welfare of all. Gandhi was also greatly influenced by Leo Tolstoy's book *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. Gandhi set up the first community for the welfare of all in Durban, South Africa, and followed by another, in Johannesburg named after Leo Tolstoy. Gandhi and Tolstoy both, emphasised on love as the potentiality to solve all problems faced in life.

Gandhi had deep down in his heart the desire to see the welfare of all his countrymen. The Gandhian concept of sarvodaya also came as an inheritance from the cultural heritage of India. Indian culture, since the early days, of recorded history clearly conceives of the welfare of all. The concept of universal brotherhood, universal love and service to the entire creation is

contained in the ideology of hindu saints and seers. Gandhian philosophy of sarvodaya was a combined effect of all religions. The Bhagvad Gita is replete with references to the concept of universal welfare or the welfare of all which influenced Gandhi thoughts and actions. Upanishads also mentioned welfare of all in its own way. The first verse of *Isavayopnishad* deals with the ideology of sarvodaya. The first part of the verse contains the principles of equality and fraternity. According to Gandhi,

” Universal brotherhood not only the brotherhood of all human beings but of all living beings, I find in this mantra...”⁴

Apart from hindu scriptures, Buddhism and Jainism served as adjuncts to hinduism, also lay equal emphasis on the welfare of all. Gandhi was immensely influenced and profoundly impressed by Buddhist philosophy, whose teachings are universal love, non-violence, and sacrifice. Buddha's emphasis on purity of means, influenced Gandhi who constantly accentuated that there is an inseparable relation between pure means and noble end.⁵

Universal love and universal welfare form the cornerstones of Buddhist philosophy. The Jainas equally accept as their ideal the welfare of all. Benudhar Pradhan states that:

“The Concept of welfare for all was so much integral part of Jaina Philosophy that the term Sarvodaya was used by one Jaina teacher Samantabhadra even before the Christian era.”⁶

Though the word sarvodaya was used by Jaina teacher Samantabhadra for the first time, yet Gandhi's usage attached a new meaning to it. Gandhi was greatly influenced by the teachings of Islam. Islam not only conceives of Allah or God as omniscient, omnipresent having no beginning and no end. It also concedes that all emanates from God. He learnt the message of universal brotherhood from it. Gandhi declares that in his view the idea of brotherhood is manifested in no other religion as clearly as in Islam.⁷ Gandhi attempted to synthesize the seminal Ideas of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam and thoughts of Ruskin and Tolstoy as well as the national leaders of Indian freedom movement. The philosophy of sarvodaya takes up the Gandhian synthesis and tries to work out the implications of their ideas at more critical and analytical levels.⁸

Gandhi's notion of sarvodaya was greatly influenced by Ruskin's *Unto this Last*. In this book Ruskin had advocated the social welfare of the greatest numbers. But sarvodaya aimed towards the upliftment of the last member as well as *antyodaya* thus making its perspective and scope much larger. Sarvodaya is thus an enlarged and absolute version of *antyodaya*. Sarvodaya emphasised on the 'welfare of all' or 'the greatest good of all'. Initially sarvodaya gives priority to the welfare of lowest of the low and the poorest of poor which is what the principle of *antyodaya* is. It sometimes seems that *antyodaya* is the very soul of sarvodaya. Most of the welfare theories in this world concentrate on larger numbers thereby often neglecting the marginalised. Gandhi always gave preference to the minority. He insisted on the cooperation

of both, majority and minority to establish an ideal society completely free from exploitation. For this he suggests that:

“Let us not push the mandate theory to ridiculous extremes and become slaves to resolution of majorities. That would be a revival of brute force in a more virulent form. If rights of minorities are to be respected, the majority must tolerate and respect their opinion and action...It will be the duty of the majority to see to it that the minorities receive a proper hearing and are not otherwise exposed to insult.”⁹

Even when large number of people are catered to not all are included.

Gandhi saw this as a difference between a utilitarian and an absolutist. For him:

“A votary of Ahimsa cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula. He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realise the ideal. He will therefore be willing to die so that the others may live. He will serve himself with the rest, by himself dying. The greatest good of all inevitably includes the good of the greatest number, and therefore, he and the utilitarian will converge at many points in their career but there does come a time when they must part company, and even work in opposite directions. The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself. The absolutist will even sacrifice himself.”¹⁰

Sarvodaya rejects theories, which give advantage to a selected few. He wished the entire population to be included irrespective of class, caste, creed, colour, race, religion or region. Contrary to utilitarianism, sarvodaya stands for the high and the low, the strong or the weak, the intelligent as well as the dull. It

means welfare and prosperity of all. All must progress together without any ill will and disputes.

To Gandhi, the more we follow truth and the greater our practice of non-violence, the more we will increasingly perceive the essence of 'universal welfare'. About the role of ahimsa in sarvodaya, Gandhi wrote in *Young India* that:

“Sarvodaya is impossible without Satyagraha. The word Satyagraha should be understood here in its etymological sense. There can be no insistence on truth where there is no non-violence. Hence the attainment of Sarvodaya depends upon the attainment of nonviolence. The attainment of non-violence in its turn depends upon tapascharya. Tapascharya, again, should be pure. Ceaseless effort, discretion, etc., should form part of it. Pure tapascharya leads to pure knowledge.” And then Gandhi said that “In other words, in every sentence of Sarvodaya, we should catch a glimpse of non-violence and knowledge.”¹¹

Gandhi cherished the establishment of a democratic state and a new social order on principles of truth and non-violence through sarvodaya.

Sarvodaya could be further explained as micro-form, which meant the rise of one and all and macro-form which meant a universal welfare and an overall development of all. According to Vinoba Bhave, a disciple of Gandhi, the term sarvodaya commands two fold meaning. Firstly, sarvodaya means making all happy by removing suffering and poverty with the help of scientific

knowledge. Secondly establishing a world state full with divinity, kindness and equality.¹²

We note that the entire philosophy of Gandhi revolves around the principle of spiritual unity. In this respect sarvodaya is extremely significant as it represents the spiritual welfare of all. It calls for the spiritual fraternity of all people. The dynamics of sarvodaya assumes a process that begins with the last and the least in the society and moves on towards *moksha* on earth or *Ram Rajya* (Kingdom of God). This kingdom was to be attained on earth and had to be created and nurtured with sarvodaya beliefs and practices.¹³ Thus the vision of Gandhi as regards sarvodaya is derived from the principle of spiritual unity. According to Gandhi:

“I do not believe that the spiritual law works on a field of its own. On the contrary, it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and political fields.”¹⁴

Gandhi believed that it was not possible for one person to gain spirituality when the world around him was steeped with suffering. He says in *Young India* that:

“I do not believe...that an individual may gain spiritually and those who surround him suffer. I believe in advaita, I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, of all that life's. Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent.”¹⁵

The essence of Gandhi's over-all metaphysical and ethical views can be collected from the following statement by Gandhi in 1936 that:

“Man's ultimate aim is the realisation of God, and all his activities, social, political, religious have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavor, simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. And this cannot be done except through one's country.”¹⁶

While practicing sarvodaya, Gandhi stressed on morality as means towards an achievement of a good society. This would mean that through any impure means like cunning, hypocrisy, violence or hatred one may get a desired end, but for Gandhi means determines the end. He wrote in *Young India* that:

“They say, 'means are after all means'. I would say, 'means are after all everything'. As the means so the end.... There is no wall of separation between the means and the end. Indeed, the Creator has given us control (and that, too, very limited) over means, none over the end. Realisation of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exception.”¹⁷

He sums up that “Means and ends are convertible terms in my philosophy of life.”¹⁸ In general, however, it is held that immoral means, such as violence, cannot produce moral ends, as means are themselves ends or ends in the

making. One of the means that leads to sarvodaya is self sacrifice. There can be no justice to sarvodaya if a preparedness to sacrifice is absent. Sacrifice is not only necessary at the individual level but at larger levels too.

To Gandhi, the individual was as important, if not more, than the society, as he firmly believed that the happiness of the individual constituted collective happiness of the society. For Gandhi, social welfare meant the conscious submission of the individual and a voluntary contribution of one's entire possessions to the society. In return, the social system, built upon the principles of non-violence and democracy, was to give a complete guarantee for the maximum development of the individual's personality. Gandhi's idea of an individual's development was based on truthfulness, brahmacharya, non-violence, non-stealing and non-possession. These rules of life were mandatory for all individuals. A man's character, therefore, was to be built on the foundations of these disciplines and to be observed by everyone in the world. Further Gandhi's method of combating evil was never a superficial handling of issues but striking at its very root. He started a two-pronged approach; one from the individual point of view and the other from the social point of view, thus changing the individual to change the society. Like many other social reformers, he did not try to break the system or age-old customs of a society. He tried to give those age-old customs a rational interpretation and applied them in the changed context of modern times. In short, he tried to bring about a synthesis between what was advantageous in the old customs and the modern ways to bring about real social welfare.

The sarvodaya appeal is primarily directed towards the transformation of the individual, family, village, community, nation and the world. However, the approach is not exclusively confined to the realm of human values nor does it take on a linear mode of progression. It is a practical and an integrated application of the idea of sarvodaya for the solution of numerous social, economic and political ills and injustices, which are intertwined and inter-related. Sarvodaya movement attempts to bring about a revolutionary change in society moving towards a non-violent social order by bringing about a parallel and closely linked transformation in the three spheres of economic production, distribution and consumption. Sarvodaya aims towards the realisation of an integrated national community. It endeavours to bring together people of diverse linguistic and religious communities under one national community.

When applied to an individual, sarvodaya means the integrated growth of his physical, emotional, intellectual, moral and spiritual potentialities into a harmonious whole. An individual attains sarvodaya when his body becomes healthy, his heart pure and rich with love, truth, goodness and beauty; his intellect steady; clear and penetrating and his spirit so all-pervading as to include the whole world within its folds. The attainment of sarvodaya is thus the fulfillment of the human being, the realisation of the purpose of his or her existence and is no different from the attainment of the supreme goal often referred to self-realisation or the Kingdom of God.

In the case of society, sarvodaya means the achievement by all its members of the total progress each is capable of. It aims at the greatest good of

the whole of humanity without any discrimination of nationality, race, caste, creed, sex and so forth. Exploitation in any form is completely repugnant to the sarvodaya social order. Love, understanding, co-operation, mutual trust, and self-denial take the place of rivalry, fierce competition, distrust, self interest and so forth. Unification takes the place of division. If the sarvodaya society could be compared to the human body each member therein is like its limb contributing actively to the well-being of the whole body. Each limb attains its maximum well-being by striving to its utmost without rivalry or selfishness for the maximum well-being of the body. Just as a body becomes ill when one limb does not function properly, so society will suffer when individuals either do not contribute their maximum or do not receive their full requirements. The individuals need to co-operate whole heartedly and discharge their obligations to themselves and others fully, if sarvodaya is to be realised.

Gandhi believed in an integrated approach towards any human problem. He saw the economic and political system as unified and approached it in its complexity. He said:

“To me political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life. Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state,

therefore, there is no political power because there is no state. But the ideal is never fully realised in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that government is best which governs the least.”¹⁹

In the ideal society, as conceived by Gandhi, each individual will be a law unto himself and hence, there would be no necessity of a state or state-made laws. But he concedes that a fully stateless society is beyond the reach of the man, and the goal of human endeavour can only be to reduce the order of the state to the minimum. Sarvodaya as political doctrine is somewhat anarchist. Like the anarchists, Gandhi also has a stateless society as his ideal. He is opposed to the state because the state, according to him, is an instrument of violence. He says:

“The State represents violence in a concentrated and organised form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soul less machine, it can never be detached from the violence to which it owes its very existence.”²⁰

He, however, was realist enough to realised that it would take a long time for this ideal to be attained, maintaining that:

“A government cannot succeed in becoming entirely non-violent, because it represents all the people. I do not to-day conceive of such a golden age. But I do believe in the possibility of a predominantly non-violent society. And I am working for it.”²¹

Gandhi did not believe in the state encroaching upon the liberty of the individual, however he said that so long as the state exists, it will have to try to

create conditions which will enable an individual to realise his best self and by adopting non-violence and welfare of all citizens, the state can minimize the violence. The implementation of sarvodaya can be of great assistance in minimizing violence to a large degree. Highlighting the symbiosis between politics and economics influencing human existence Gandhi said:

“True economics,..... stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally, including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life.”²²

He wished to bring such a system in place over the world that no one would suffer from want of basic amenities. For this to become viable he thought it right to place it in control of common people. Gandhi stated:

“And this ideal can be universally realised only if the means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God’s air and water are or ought to be.”²³

But on the other hand Gandhi also said that An Ideal society where the contribution of everyone is not possible. For him:

“It is not conducive to the well-being of society that every member uses all his talents, only not for personal aggrandizement but for the good of all? We do not want to produce a dead equality where every person becomes or is rendered incapable of using his ability to the utmost possible extent. Such a society must ultimately perish. I therefore suggest that my advice, that moneyed men may earn their cores

(honestly only, of course) but so as to dedicate them to the service of all, is perfectly sound.”²⁴

Thus Gandhi's sarvodaya economic order is based on simplicity, self-sufficiency, cooperation, equality, non-violence, swadeshi, and trusteeship. By following this path, the society would be able to create a balance between labour, capital, production and profit and move in the direction of equitable justice.

Rights and duties play a prominent part in making sarvodaya a reality. When every individual and the state recognises its duties and rights, the welfare of all seems reachable. Gandhi's chief concern was always with duties rather than with rights. He said:

“I promise the rights will follow as spring follows winter. I write from experience. As a young man I began life by seeking to assert my rights and I soon discovered I had none, not even over my wife. So I began by discovering and performing my duty by my wife, my children, friends, companions and society and I find today that I have greater rights, perhaps than any living man I know. If this is too tall a claim then I say I do not know anyone who possesses greater rights than I.”²⁵

Gandhi felt that socialism and sarvodaya are closely connected. If the former is achieved, the latter gets to be initiated simultaneously. Socialism means an extension of equal treatment to all. Socialism and sarvodaya are movements born in response to the miseries born out of inequalities prevalent in the society. Both are modules of the same humanism with an intention of

eliminating the misfortune of the underprivileged. Gandhi describes socialism as a factor urging for equality between all people. He stated that:

“Socialism is a beautiful word and, so far as I am aware, in socialism all the members of society are equal—none low, none high. In the individual body the head is not high because it is the top of the body, nor are the soles of the feet low because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. That is socialism. In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and employee are all on the same level. In terms of religion there is no duality in socialism. It is all unity.”²⁶

Gandhi's paradigm of socialism lies in his answer to a question posed by Louis Fischer regarding socialism. He said:

“My socialism means ‘even unto this last’. I do not want to rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and the dumb. In their socialism, probably these have no place. Their one aim is material progress. For instance, America aims at having a car for every citizen. I do not. I want freedom for full expression of my personality. I must be free to build a staircase to Sirius if I want to. That does not mean that I want to do any such thing. Under the other socialism, there is no individual freedom. You own nothing, not even your body.”²⁷

In Gandhi's socialism there is no place for violence. He writes:

“I have claimed that I was a socialist long before those I know in India had avowed their creed. But my socialism was natural to me and not adopted from any books. It came out of my unshakable belief in non-violence. No man could be actively non-violent and not rise against social injustice, no matter where it occurred. Unfortunately, Western socialists have, so far as I know, believed in the necessity of violence for enforcing socialistic doctrines.”²⁸

It is a fact that the two social systems run parallel to each other, yet they are greatly distanced in their approach. There are three basic distinctions between socialism and sarvodaya. The first is the outlook of sarvodaya regarding material belongings. It does not undermine the importance of possessing goods but not beyond one's need and not as the dominant goal of all human endeavour. Whereas socialism projects itself as materialistic in its approach, sarvodaya is deeply spiritual in nature. Secondly, whereas the chief aim of socialism is nationalization, the main concern of sarvodaya is the upliftment of villages. In the third place, radical socialism, i.e. communism believes violence to be the proper technique of destroying existing capitalistic structures. Sarvodaya on the other hand reserves no place for violence in its philosophy and technique. It upholds nobility and purity as the correct means and holds that only non violence can lay the foundation of a society free from exploitation and injustice.

Gandhi was aware of the short comings in both, communism and capitalism, as they both failed to deliver satisfaction. Gandhi, in turn brought up the notion of trusteeship by infusing the positive aspects of both the social orders. Gandhi stated that:

“Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption. It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.... Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.”²⁹

To the socio-political order of sarvodaya the idea of trusteeship filled in as the most innovative handling of its economic aspect. As the most original Gandhian approach the theory of trusteeship stood for elimination of exploitation in every form, a classless society which offered no privileges determined by birth or wealth or talent. It called for mutual cooperation to be the driving force in securing the welfare of all without any distinction of religion, sex and political connection. Mishra mentioned that:

“Human values, individual development that’s always consistent with its use for the development of society; promotion of altruism to the highest degree; integration of the individual with society; lifting the whole human society to the highest level of existence

where love and fair play will have the most crucial roles to play; these are the most predominant characteristics of the Sarvodaya ideal.”³⁰

Gandhi's Idea of trusteeship is a system of the society in which unfairness, inequality, greed, and selfishness had no place and even the downtrodden individual of the society could live with self respect and have the opportunity to perform to the fullest of his or her capability. Gandhi recommended trusteeship to be the model of ownership of property that was concerned with the welfare or the Sarvodaya of all. It attempts an equal distribution of resources and wealth and eventually leads to social justice for all. Gandhi writes:

“Economic equality is the master key to nonviolent independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the leveling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and the leveling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other.”³¹

He further stated that:

“A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good.”³²

Gandhian philosophy of trusteeship sees that the most disadvantaged sections of the community were the economically, the physically and the mentally poor. In a society where sarvodaya was to be practiced, the poor had to be

considered and be a part of the evolutionary process. And the focus must be alleviating the status to an appreciable decent level. Gandhi expresses his thought in this regard where he termed sarvodaya as a non-violent system, as:

“A nonviolent system of government is clearly an impossibility, so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor, labouring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land.”³³

Gandhi further pointed out the importance of bread labour, a concept that said that each person must work to earn his bread. It meant that one should earn one's living through manual labour. Needs of the body should be fulfilled through bodily labour. Gandhi conveys his thought of endorsing bread labour as the means of equality as:

“Every man has an equal right to the necessities of life even as birds and beasts have. And since every right carries with it a corresponding duty and the corresponding remedy for resisting any attack upon it, it is merely a matter of finding out the corresponding duties and remedies to vindicate the elementary fundamental equality. The corresponding duty is to labour with my limbs and the corresponding remedy is to non-co-operate with him who deprives me of the fruit of my labour.”³⁴

Trusteeship holds in esteem the idea of non-possession. Only when the rich share their wealth with the poor true equality in the economic sense

would be possible. Sarvodaya or the rising of all people would become possible once the root cause of possession and accumulation has been eliminated. Gandhi also said:

“You may have occasion to possess or use material things, but the secret of life lies in never missing them.” On the other hand, he also said, “This does not mean that, if one has wealth, it should be thrown away and wife and children should be turned out of doors. It simply means that one must give up attachment of these things and dedicate one's all to God and make use of His gifts to serve Him only.”³⁵

To realise sarvodaya in the Indian context, Gandhi felt that a complete survey of the social, economic and political condition of the majority of Indians, i.e. the rural masses of India was in order. He claimed that the ideal of democratic decentralisation would be the specific contribution of sarvodaya to the politico-ethical renaissance. Gandhi also was of the view that to attain sarvodaya, a series of fourteen fold curriculum which he called as constructive programmes, needed to be launched for the upliftment of the Indian society. For him satyagraha and the constructive programmes are the concrete embodiment of sarvodaya. If civil disobedience and non-violent resistance could arouse the conscience of others, the constructive programme would be able to channel that awakened sensitivity in beneficial ways. Within the Indian context, this meant nurturing communal unity, abolishing untouchability, fostering adult education and systematic improvement of villages. It meant uplifting the peasants and developing non-violent labour unions, working

towards economic and social equality, promoting cottage and small-scale industries as a means for decentralising economic production and distribution and eradicating a wide variety of social evils. Most of these measures were aimed towards the upliftment of rural India rather than catering to the urban classes. Nearly 75 percent of the Indians were engaged in agriculture and they went without work for at least three months in a year. The landless labourers whose number was much more, found work only during the sowing and reaping seasons. These prolonged periods of unemployment were the cause of their continued poverty. Gandhi felt a much greater need to pay greater attention to the agrarian rather than industrial development, thereby trying to achieve social and economic regeneration at the grass root level. Gandhi remained skeptical about imposing social reformation from top. His constructive programmes were:

“designed to build up the nation from very bottom upward.”³⁶

Thus his effort was to deliver the greatest possible good to all. Social reform was his chief concern and close to his heart. He wrote:

“..... my work of social reform was in no way less than or subordinate to political work. The fact is, that when I saw that to a certain extent my social work would be impossible without the help of political work, I took to the latter and only to the extent that it helped the former. I must therefore confess that work of social reform or self-purification of this nature is a hundred times dearer to me than what is called purely political work.”³⁷

The constructive programmes if carried out in the right direction believed Gandhi would result in the ideal sarvodaya samaj. Constructive work as planned by him was something that everyone could participate in. If all social and economic strata of people could actively participate in the constructive programme, then it would provide a common experience and become a symbol of democratic common endeavour, thus bridging the gap between all classes and the masses.

Critics, however point out a few short comings in Gandhi's views on Sarvodaya. First that sarvodaya ideals were not practical enough in approach and though the ideals of sarvodaya are noble in the actual world it would not be possible to establish a society strictly on the basis of great principles. Secondly some critics felt that sarvodaya philosophy was based on a moral approach which believed in the regeneration of the human heart and mind as it wanted to perfect the mechanism of representative democracy by utilising ethical idealism. Thirdly critics felt that Gandhi gave priority to trying to revive village industries, a symbol of which was the *charkha* thus providing spinning the first place in his economic programme thereby ignoring agriculture, which was the occupation of a large population. Later his followers namely Vinoba Bhave and Jai Prakash Narayan gave top priority to agriculture for the success of sarvodaya.

It is difficult to determine Gandhi's concept of social welfare, because, he dealt with all problems from the point of view of a social revolutionary without violence. His humanism and relentless efforts to wipe off injustice in

any form, towards any person or group such as women, *harijans*, landless farmers etc. makes him a pioneer of social welfare through social change with a base of truth and non-violence leading to sarvodaya. His way of thinking was so unique that it could not be compared with any school of thought.

Gandhi visualised social reconstruction as an emergence of people through individual and social discipline, towards a healthy and happy society. The Gandhian concept has been woven in the fabric of Indian society since time immemorial where help to the needy was enjoined by *dharma*. Gandhi went a step further as for him, rights and duties went hand in hand. Both parties had to correlate and cooperate to improve the conditions.

The doctrine of sarvodaya has immense capability of accomplishing the present day challenges. Relevance of sarvodaya perhaps would be more in the 21st century for by placing emphasis on the goodness of human nature, unity of human beings, service to man, non violent process of change, social and economic equality, greater demand of decentralisation of power, and disturbance to domestic and international harmony etc. can be resolved. In an age of cut throat competition, the significance of sarvodaya lies in stressing self sacrifice. Sarvodaya paved the way for the moral principles in bringing about goodness in place of manipulation and ill will. Corruption, one of the dominant menaces of this era, can only be handled by the incorporation of moral and spiritual values being incorporated in economic, political as well as political life. The moral collapse of this world can only be rectified by an ethical idealism, which can be achieved through a practice of sarvodaya.

The entire essence of sarvodaya and Gandhi's appeal to it is revealed as quoted below:

“I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test: Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj for the hungry and the spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away.”³⁸

Chapter V

The Fountainhead of Gandhi's Ethical Ideas

Gandhi was regarded to be one of the greatest moralists of the twentieth century. His moral or ethical ideas were so firm, and deeply active in his being that he felt its omnipresent influence every moment of life. In Gandhi's philosophy ethical values is considered as an integral part of man's life. Hence it is not regarded as any separate and independent concept in the philosophy of Gandhi. Gandhi anchored his life in morality, and endeavored passionately the moral concepts in every walk of life-social, religious, political, and economic. Morality becomes the pivotal point of his ever-active and successful life.

He applied his moral force for the welfare of the masses. According to him, the entire human race can be saved from degeneration only with the help of this great power. The entire Gandhian thought rests on a dynamic unity of conception. This is grounded in a basic moral vision of the world. He applied the weapon of his ethical strength in every sphere. He tried to solve all problems whether social, political or religious on the platform of ethics. Behind this ethical power lay his spiritual power. Gandhi always laid great stress on spirituality, which, according to him, was the only great force to be practiced for the solution of life's problems. Also religion correctly understood is inseparable from ethics and can in turn articulate itself in religious and spiritual terminology.

Truth is the very foundation of the entire philosophy and doctrines of Gandhi, truth being the nucleus around which all his principles and thoughts revolve. Gandhi was a devoted follower of truth about which he not only wrote and preached but also brought into rigorous practice. His entire life was a determination to tread on the footsteps of truth. He lived his entire life in perpetual quest for truth and it is in that life pursuit that Gandhi evolved his concept of truth that he had tremendous faith in. His Autobiography, '*The Story of My Experiments with Truth*', is a compilation of events of his entire life which he lived in constant search for truth.

Soul-force is the power from within i.e. the inner strength of a person, comprising of love, truth and non-violence which is far more powerful than physical strength. At a first glance it is the body that meets the eye and not the inner nucleus that is real substance and essence. The outer crust needs to be cracked in order to discover the essence. Whenever a person peels off or shatters this outer crust the essence becomes accessible. This inner power i.e. soul-force is of immense substance as compared to the physical force.

Brahmacharya is central to Gandhi's ethical philosophy in such a way that the other ethical concepts are either incomplete or are lacking in their credibility without its inclusion. Brahmacharya was no doubt is an ideological weapon. Gandhi said that selfless love must be free of lust and for this reason he took the oath of brahmacharya.

Gandhi struggled hard throughout his entire life to sparkle from the fountainhead of ethical ideas. He wanted every individual of the society to be

ethically stalwart in order that everyone may lead a perfect moral life as this life directed towards the good and welfare of the entire human race.

(a) **Truth**

“Devotion to truth is the sole justification for our existence. All our activities should be centered in truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. When once this stage in the pilgrim’s progress is reached, all other rules of correct living will come without effort, and obedience to them will be instinctive. But without truth it is impossible to observe any principles or rules in life.”

(CWMG, Vol. 49, P.383)

“For me, truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God. There are innumerable definitions of God, because His manifestations are innumerable. They overwhelm me with wonder and awe and for a moment stun me.”¹

This definition of truth by Gandhi is sufficient to show the very wide range of connotations which the notion of truth possessed for him. Truth is the very foundation of the entire philosophy and doctrines of Gandhi, truth being the nucleus around which all his principles and thoughts revolve. Gandhi was a devoted follower of truth about which he not only wrote and preached but also brought into rigorous practice. His entire life was a determination to tread on

the footsteps of truth. Each path he chose, every principle he imbibed was a resolute and persistent effort never to deviate from the call of truth. He lived his entire life in perpetual quest for truth and it is in that life pursuit that Gandhi evolved his concept of truth that he had tremendous faith in. His autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, is a compilation of events of his entire life which he lived in constant search for truth. Gandhi spent his life with the sole objective of asserting truth, day by day with more and more determination. Gandhi said: "Truth became my sole objective. It began to grow in magnitude every day, and my definition of it also has been ever widening."² Truth has various senses in the Gandhian thought that he used in his different doctrines. It may be the ultimate goal, highest good, absolute existence, and highest morality. In Gandhi's perception, service to mankind is the ultimate goal of one's life. Gandhi uses the word truth in various contexts in their different implications quite effectively. Gandhi put in all his effort in the search for truth. For him one merges with truth seamlessly only through self realisation. He felt that truth resides in every person's heart and through a constant search in one's own heart for truth it becomes possible to gain the right perspective of life. It may not be appropriated all at once but a constant effort leads to the realisation of truth. In his words:

"I am but a seeker after Truth. I claim to have found the way to it. I claim to be making a ceaseless effort to find it. But I admit that I have not yet found it. To find Truth completely is to realise oneself and one's destiny, to become perfect."³

In his quest for truth Gandhi was influenced by different persons, events and traditions that he came in contact with. His journey on the path of truth began in his early age through his family. The seeds for the quest of truth were sown in young Gandhi by his father, a brave, truthful and generous man. To him the love he bore for his father had put him on the path of truthfulness. He admitted this fact as:

“Even so, if we do a good thing, whether out of attachment or love, it is bound to profit us. There is attachment in a son’s love for his father. Some credit for my having learnt to speak the truth goes to my father.”⁴

The extreme saintliness and religiosity of his mother also created a strong impression on Gandhi. Her attributes made young Gandhi a firm believer of truth. He was greatly influenced by Imam Hasan and his suffering on the path of righteousness and truth. Gandhi’s reading on Imam Husain, King Harishchandra, young Prahlad, Krishna, devotee Mira, Socrates and Leo Tolstoy shaped Gandhi’s perception towards the truth deeply entrenched in the core of Gandhi’s personality. Pyarelal in his book *Mahatma Gandhi* writes about the impression of Tolstoy upon Gandhi in the following words:

“It was not Tolstoy’s writings alone, but the example of his life- his passion for truth and ceaseless striving after perfection, that enthroned him in Gandhiji’s heart and led him later to describe himself as “a humble follower of that great leader whom I have long looked upon as one of my guides”. In him he found a kindred spirit- a single-minded seeker after truth; an aristocrat turned peasant and shoemaker in pursuit of the

meaning of life, who dedicated his wealth and talents and genius to the service of humanity while he himself strove to live by his body labour;”⁵

Gandhi also grasped the teachings of truth from the Indian scriptures. India had a rich tradition in the following of truth. The act of Rama to go to forests to honour his father's words, the Pandavas leaving their Kingdom, Hastinapur for 14 years exile for penance. The teachings of Buddhism, Jainism and that of Gita revealed the essence of truth embedded in them. Gandhi's insistence of truth was not unrelated to the Indian scriptures and religions. Gandhi also deeply admired the contribution of Jesus and Prophet Muhammad as both of them strove for truth constantly.

Jaina theory of *anekantavada* and *syadvada* had a deep impact on Gandhi in seeking for truth. In endorsing *anekantavada*, ‘manyness’ of truth or reality, Gandhi was able to accept the theories of *advaita* and *dvaita*. On this viewpoint, Gandhi clarified his stand as:

“I am an advaitist and yet I can support dvaitism (dualism). The world is changing every moment, and is therefore unreal, it has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing, it has something about it which persists and it is therefore to that extent real. I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an *anekantavadi* or a *syadvadi*.”⁶

These influences lead to evolving a new concept of truth from Gandhi's standpoint, articulating a new doctrine of truth that distinguishes between

absolute and relative truth, which ultimately leads to becoming a worshipper and champion of truth.

Gandhi effectively distinguished the absolute and relative truth. He equated the former to God while the latter with the inner voice of a person and it is through the latter that the path to the attainment of the ultimate form of truth is forged. This distinction holds extreme importance for his views on truth, God and religion. The nature of truth that Gandhi associates with God is similar to the concept of the transcendental class of truth. In the absolute sense, Gandhi equated truth with God. He wrote in his book *From Yeravda Mandir*, the relation of truth to God as:

“The word Satya (Truth) is derived from Sat, which means 'being'. Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why Sat or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact it is more correct to say that Truth is God, than to say that God is Truth. But as we cannot do without a ruler or a general, such names of God as ‘King of Kings’ or ‘The Almighty’ are and will remain generally current. On deeper thinking, however, it will be realised, that Sat or Satya is the only correct and fully significant name for God.”⁷

Initially Gandhi was of the opinion that truth is an attribute of God, it is the very essence of God. Therefore Gandhi equated truth with God and said *God is Truth*. To him God and Truth are convertible terms.⁸ From his early childhood or youth, Gandhi was taught to repeat the thousand names given in the hindu scriptures. To Gandhi, since God has many names, He is nameless and since he

has many forms, He is formless. In Islam also God has many names, yet an Islamic teaching says that He is formless. In this way Gandhi realised God as truth. In his view if man is able to describe God in the fullest sense, it is only by saying God is truth. But through Gandhi's ever expanding realisation of truth and God Gandhi changes his stance from God is truth to truth is God. To him, all other description of God is not a complete but truth is the perfect description of God. No words that are used to name God can describe God to its fullest. By believing in truth is God one cannot belittle his faith, rather it should increase it. Gandhi was of the outlook that seeing God is difficult and also seeing truth initially might be difficult but as one goes nearer and nearer towards it, he sees a clear vision of truth, that is undoubtedly God, and one day by the strengthening of faith one shall see the full vision of it. Even atheists accept his view of truth is God. This way, the atheists who have not the slightest belief in God, have believed in truth. Gandhi preferred truth to God also because of the atrocities committed in the name of God. Some persons found there is no difference between God is truth and truth is God. To clarify this he wrote:

“You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, 'God is Truth' and 'Truth is God'. I came to that conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after truth which began fifty years ago. I then found that the nearest approach to truth was through love.”⁹

This fine distinction by Gandhi made between his two stands, has been taken by some scholars to be of considerable significance. R.R. Diwakar is of the view that this shift was due to several reasons Gandhi had in his mind. When one is in search of God one naturally turns to all the sources of knowledge of God, like the religious scriptures, the saints, the seers and so on, which are beset with controversies.¹⁰ The principle of truth propounded by Gandhi has a very wide spectrum philosophically. It includes ontological form of truth i.e. reality, a metaphysical ideal i.e. *moksha*, truthfulness and natural justice. Surender Verma relates Gandhi's view of truth to the epistemological as well as to the ontological aspects. He expressed it in his book *Metaphysical Foundation of Mahatma Gandhi's Thought*, as "The connotation of English word Truth is mainly epistemological. It is in order to show that Truth is not only epistemological but is also ontological that Gandhi has used the expression 'Truth is God' i.e. Supreme Being."¹¹

Truth can be called the sum total of all that is true. Absolute truth cannot be bound within any limits. Truth can only be perceived in the absolute sense. The limitations are applicable only to things that are measurable and quantitative in nature and cannot be applied to truth and love. In Gandhi's opinion absolute truth in its entirety cannot be possessed by a man for it is an attribute of God only. His duties lie in living up to the truth as one seeks it, and practicing it through the means of love, non-violence and satyagraha.

Though the only reality is absolute truth, relative truths are not unrealities. As opposed to the whole eternal truth i.e. absolute truth, relative

truths are basically partial, temporal truths. They are fleeting glimpses of truth. Everyone attempts to approach truth, but it is inaccessible and intangible. For Gandhi, this relative truth at each stage is as good as absolute truth. He explained the concept of relative truth in the perspective of absolute truth as:

“Relative truth is the truth as we perceive it in relation to a particular set of circumstances. It is the whole truth. What may be true under one set of circumstances may not be true in relation to a different set of circumstances....In contradiction with the relative truth is the absolute truth the ultimate reality – which alone is, was and forever shall be”¹²

The human mind and the situation in which relative truth is perceived, is not the same for all. What may appear as truth for one may be untruth for another. This can also be understood by the story of elephant and seven blind men who had to give their opinions of the object by touching it. All touched different parts of the body of the elephant and their description differed from each other. Though they all appeared to be correct individually in their partial assessment, the complete truth was beyond all of them. Thus one can understand truth in one's own sense but that may be untrue to the rest of the world. Since the relative truth is different for different people, Gandhi felt, tolerance was absolutely necessary. The differences could be solved through mutual tolerance. To him:

“We will never all think alike and that we shall always see Truth in fragment and from different angles of vision. Conscience is not the same thing for all. Whilst, therefore, it is a good guide for individual

conduct, imposition of that conduct upon all will be an insufferable interference with everybody else's freedom of conscience.”¹³

Gandhi was of the opinion that no human being can claim that “he is absolutely in the right or that a particular thing is wrong because he thinks so, but it is wrong for him so long as that is his deliberate judgment. It is therefore observed that he should not do that which he knows to be wrong, and suffer the consequence whatever it may be.”¹⁴ For Gandhi, a person is not able to realise the perfect truth as long as he is in the state of mortality. He can only visualize it in his imagination. As far as relative truth is concerned, the everyday truth was also of great importance to Gandhi. For him the path of his quest for the absolute truth itself lay in his search of truth in our daily life. There should be no occasion in one's life that one has to make a conscious effort to speak the truth. Even appreciation of truth is as good as following the truth in the view of Gandhi. Not to lie in any circumstance not having to keep secrets, truthful dealings in every form contribute to a process of self-purification according to Gandhi. He perceived truth as the law of life. In this context, truth can be bifurcated into two aspects. The law of life i.e. living and action is the first one and the other aspect is to confront the problems of the day to day life. Gandhi was of the opinion that whether a person follows religion or believes in God, or not he must follow these two aspects of life to prevent one's life to become ignorant. Further he said that by *abhyasa* i.e. single minded devotion, and *vairagya* i.e. indifference to all other distractions in life one can realise truth. In

his opinion seeking the absolute truth through the path of relative truth has its own relevance. Gandhi said:

“As long as I have not realised this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler.”¹⁵

Relative truth implies that one must act according to the dictates of one's conscience. The conscience means ‘mind distinguishing between right or wrong and influence one's conduct accordingly’. To Gandhi it is ‘inner voice’ or ‘voice of God’. The nature of inner voice and the suddenness with which it emerges, should not be understood as a notion that it is revealed without any effort. This voice is within every one and it needs constant practice and preparation. Just as for a scientific experiment to be conducted, there are a set of instructions that need to be followed, in the same way strict preliminary discipline is necessary to be qualified to be able to listen to the true inner voice.

Gandhi writes how one can become aware of the true inner voice:

“Since everybody says it is his inner voice which speaks, you must listen to the voice, and you will then find out your limitations as you go along the path. Therefore, we have the belief based upon uninterrupted experience that those who would make diligent search after Truth—God—must go through these vows: the vow of truth—speaking and thinking of truth, the vow of brahmacharya, of non-violence, poverty and non-possession. If you do not take these five vows you may not embark on the experiments.”¹⁶

Gandhi was not naive to the experience of inner voice. Having made a perpetual effort to practice and thereby attaining self-purification, he admits that he had developed an ability to hear the small voice from within. This attainment of inner voice makes it evident that the person is somewhat, through proper discipline, on the path of absolute truth. One must beware of self-deception while listening to his inner voice. Gandhi said that, the capacity to be able to hear one's inner voice comes through much hard work, discipline and strict nurturing of conscience. Obedience to the inner voice brings laurels and happiness. Gandhi felt refreshed when he took to fasting upon listening and obeying his inner voice. Therefore to distinguish truth from untruth Gandhi followed the dictates of the inner voice for it is truth which is told by the voice within oneself.

Gandhi reiterates time and again that God alone is *sat*, He alone is reality; nothing else and no one else. Everything in this universe is an illusion except the *satya* and truth alone prevails. K. L. Seshagiri Rao in his book *On Truth: A Hindu perspective, philosophy of East and West* depicted the qualities and attributes of truth as "Brahman is the whole truth. It is immanent and transcendent, dynamic and static, personal and impersonal. These qualities appear to be incompatible to our limited minds, but in Brahman all paradoxes are resolved and reconciled"¹⁷ In Gandhi's relating God to truth he says that, like God, truth too has many attributes that enhance its power and relevance to the mankind. Each attribute of truth is substantive. Gandhi was convinced by the orderliness in the universe. "There is an unalterable law governing

everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law; for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings”.¹⁸ This way Gandhi was also of the opinion that truth is the law of our being. Truth had been recognized as integral to the divine law from time immemorial and Gandhi acknowledged this by saying “There is no other law or dharma than truth.”¹⁹ Gandhi gave a number of attributes to God that are all a manifestation of truth. He summed it up in his writing as:

“To me God is truth and love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist... He is the searcher of hearts. He transcends speech and reason. He knows us and our hearts better than we do ourselves. He does not take us at our word for He knows that we often do not mean it, some knowingly and others unknowingly. He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is the purest essence. He simply is to those who have faith. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us.”²⁰

He was of the view that truth is the perfect explanation of all the characteristics and features.

Ultimately the law of our being cannot be anything other than truth itself. Truth is existence. The identity of truth and existence refers to the very first principle of being in all the things. In his views truth is the only real thing that exists in this universe. Truth is knowledge in the absolute sense of the

term. To Gandhi, knowledge is not being merely scientific or with worldly knowledge but it is the knowledge of integral experience of reality. He was also of the strong view that where there is truth, there is also a presence of knowledge which is true in nature. *Chit* or knowledge is also associated with the God. *Chit* is also perceived as conscience in the purest form. When the *Chit* is realised all differences and doubts are eliminated and life is transformed and we live in bliss and joy. Gandhi expressed this trio of God as truth, knowledge and bliss. He says:

“And where there is Truth, there also is knowledge which is true. Where there is no Truth, there can be no true knowledge. That is why the word *chit* or knowledge is associated with the name of God. And where there is true knowledge, there is always *ananda*, bliss. There sorrow has no place. And even as Truth is eternal, so is the bliss derived from it. Hence we know God as *Sat-chit-ananda*, one who combines in Himself Truth, knowledge and bliss.”²¹

Truth is also beautiful; Gandhi was of the opinion that there is no opposition or disagreement between truth and real beauty. Truth is the essence of art in the thought of Gandhi. Further, art divorced from truth is not true art and beauty devoid of truth is utter ugliness. Art in order to be real must contain in itself the inner truth of human beings. Gandhi perceives beauty in truth and through truth. To him:

“All truths, not merely true ideas, but truthful faces, truthful pictures or songs, are highly beautiful. The people generally fail to see beauty in truth, the

ordinary man runs away from it and becomes blind to the beauty in it. Whenever men begin to see beauty in truth, then true art will arise.”²²

Truth may also be present in the form which may not be beautiful outwardly. To Gandhi mere outward appearance may not make a thing beautiful. Gandhi cited an example of the famous Greek philosopher, who was the most truthful man of his times, and his features are said to be ugliest in the country. Gandhi wrote:

“To my mind, he was beautiful because all his life was a striving after truth, and you may remember that his outward form did not prevent Phidias from appreciating the beauty of truth in him, though as an artist he was accustomed to see beauty in outward forms also.”²³

Love in the sense of a centripetal and cohesive force is the expression of truth in this phenomenal world. For Gandhi, truth is also being which is the ultimate law of love. S. Abid Husain relates love to truth in the philosophy of Gandhi as:

“Love has the same relation to Truth in Gandhi’s intuitive theory of reality as a perception has to ‘idea’ in Kant’s critical theory of knowledge. That is they are complementary to each other. As perception gives substance to bare idea, so does love serves as solid content of the airy form of Truth. Gandhi’s variation of Kant’s famous words ‘Perception without idea is blind and idea without perception is empty’ was:

‘Love without truth is blind and truth without love is empty’. ”²⁴

Truth cannot exist without love said Gandhi as he realised that the nearest approach to truth is through love. He saw many meanings of love, and he emphasised the importance of love in truth as:

“TRUTH and LOVE have been jointly the guiding principle of my life. If God who is indefinable can be at all defined, then I should say that God is TRUTH. It is impossible to reach HIM, that is, TRUTH, except through LOVE. Love can only be expressed fully when man reduces himself to a cipher.”²⁵

In the philosophy of Gandhi truth and non-violence are identical, like the two sides of coin, which is the ultimate law of being. Non-violence is embedded in truth making them inseparable from each other. Non-violence was not interpreted by Gandhi simply in the negative sense of non-injury, rather it was understood and practiced by him positively. In all his doctrines and actions he always emphasised the observance to truth and non-violence but of the two, truth always stood first for him. He said that it was the pursuit of truth which helped him to find the principle of non-violence. In other words it was only in the pursuit of truth that he discovered non-violence. Non-violence is the means and truth is the end for him. He says that ahimsa (non-violence) is the means that leads to truth. Without ahimsa, it is not possible to seek and find truth. Moreover for Gandhi, non-violence which is the means is most important for the realisation of the end, i.e. truth. In the opinion of Gandhi, if one adheres to the means he is bound to reach the end sooner or later. Hence for attaining truth

which is the end it is essential to follow and pursue non-violence in all fields of life.²⁶ But “Means to be means must always be within our reach and so ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later.”²⁷ Gandhi was of the opinion that there is no *dharma* other than truth i.e. *satyannasti parodharma* but non-violence is the supreme duty i.e. *ahimsaparamodharma*. For Gandhi non-violence is the most active force the world possesses. To him, “The panoplied warrior of truth and non-violence is ever and incessantly active.”²⁸

Gandhi was not merely interested in truth to prevail in the personal capacity or personal virtue. Rather, he was keen on making it into a social movement for overcoming untruth and violence. He was of the conviction that truth and non-violence are the spearheads of the movement that will fetch not only godliness for the individual but also eliminate evil. Gandhi organised this powerful movement to fight against evil in the society and moreover to inspire confidence in their strength in the poor and downtrodden masses. He called this movement satyagraha. To him “With satya combined with ahimsa, you can bring the world to your feet. Satyagraha in its essence is nothing but the introduction of truth and gentleness in the political, i.e., the national, life.”²⁹ Gandhi summarized his philosophy in one word i.e. satyagraha, which is the truth force. The word truth is impregnated into the word satyagraha. He wrote:

“Satyagraha, then, is literally holding on to Truth and it means, therefore, Truth-force. Truth is soul or spirit. It is, therefore, known as soul-force. It excludes the use of violence because man is not capable of

knowing the absolute truth and, therefore, not competent to punish.”³⁰

Satyagraha is the persistence for truth. Gandhi's satyagraha, was not only a political technique, it also implies a metaphysical position. It is the philosophy of truth in action and satya in satyagraha is understood in the ethical sense. Gandhi identified satyagraha with soul-force or love-force. Unless a person does not have basic love for human being, he cannot preach or practice satyagraha in the true sense. Satyagraha also demands selfless and sincere pursuit of truth.

Truth is the supreme quality or doctrine that controls all other qualities of a human being. Gandhi was an earnest seeker after truth. This truth, for him, was God. He preferred this expression to the previous one that, 'God is Truth' because God was the Ultimate Being(Sat), whereas in the expression 'God is Truth', truth appeared as an attribute. When one is truthful in his life, he approaches this Truth-God. Thus, for Gandhi truth is not only a definition of ultimate reality (God is Truth) , it is itself a great ontological reality, existing in its own right (Truth is God) and the two expressions, 'God is Truth' and 'Truth is God' are interchangeable. In this ultimate truth all other truths exist and it is only in the light of the ultimate truth that lesser truth can be understood. Gandhi's ontological position thus inclines towards concrete idealism which stands for all-inclusive spiritual unity. Hence Gandhi's whole life was based on this truthfulness which he tried to inculcate in the life of the nation. Gandhi extended the meaning of truth far beyond its conventional usage in holding that it. It is ones duty to persist in truth; *satyamev jayate*.

(b) Soul-Force

“Strength doesn’t come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.”

(*Young India*, 11.8.1920, CWMG, Vol.21, P.134)

Soul-force is defined as the force from within i.e. the inner strength of a person, comprising of love, truth and non-violence which is far more powerful than any physical strength. Every object has two forms, an outer body and an inner kernel. At a first glance it is the body that meets the eye and not the inner core that is the real substance and essence. The outer crust needs to be cracked in order to discover the essence. Whenever a person peels off or shatters this outer crust the essence becomes accessible. This inner power i.e. soul-force is of immense substance as compared to the physical force. Gandhi identified the importance of soul-force from the very beginning in his political and social initiatives. He experimented with soul-force along with truth and non-violence and his campaigns were grounded in the use of these instruments through his entire life. His entire thought process issued through the presupposition and preexistence of these concepts. He used soul-force as a weapon to fight against all forms of injustice and held on to it as a natural part of his life till his last breath. With his weak lean body clothed in the garments of an ordinary person, he changed the future of millions of people around the world, just by his strength of soul-force. His power, like his philosophy, was rooted within his own beliefs of truth, ahimsa and love and not in physical might.

Gandhi made use of soul-force for the first time in South Africa when he opposed the law of franchise single handed undeterred by police caning as well as the legal penalty for willful breach of the law of the state named by him as 'Black Act'. At that moment he realised that it is the sacrifice of the body for the sake of truth. Again, during the struggle for the independence of India, Gandhi provided motivation to the masses, men and women who were earlier afraid of even the sight of a policeman, to develop in them the soul-force to fight against the British empire for the sake of the country. They willingly bared their chest to receive the police bullets, went to the gallows with a smile on their faces, received police caning on their body without raising even a little finger in self-defence, filled British jails and took upon themselves all the physical tortures without a murmur. Thus, Gandhi showed that even ordinary men and women were capable of cultivating soul-force and thereby exalting soul over the body. Gandhi struggled his entire life for the independence of India but he did not treat it as the sole purpose of his life. His vision and purpose was much larger. He said:

"I must continue to argue till I convert opponents or I own defeat. For my mission is to convert every Indian whether he is a Hindu, Muslim or any other, even Englishman and finally the world, to non-violence for regulating mutual relations whether political, economic, social or religious."¹

He again emphasised that:

"If I could popularize the use of soul-force, which is but another name for love-force, in the place of brute force, I

know that I could present you with an India that could defy the whole world to do its worst. In season and out of season, therefore, I shall discipline myself to express in my life this eternal law of suffering and present it for acceptance to those who care. And if I take part in any other activity, the motive is to show the matchless superiority of that law.”²

Gandhi said that soul-force is the synonymous term for non-violence and satyagraha. He defines that soul-force means to relinquish the love of body and to live consciously in nothing except truth and act from that consciousness—the state of the soul. He abandoned the desire for the fruits of his work and lived and acted in accordance with the truth discovered by him from moment to moment, with a mind fixed on truth alone. Once the state of soul is recognized, the soul-force becomes active and man always acts by the law of soul-force that becomes his nature. Soul-force, when it becomes active, is more effective than the sword in destroying evil forces.

The idea of soul-force is deep rooted in the heritage of Indian society. Gandhi was well aware of this fact. All scriptures of ancient India are replete with the philosophy of soul-force. In Ramayana, Rama stands for the soul and Ravana for the non-soul or brutal force. The immense physical might of Ravana is nothing compared to the soul-force of Rama. Rama's strength is of a *yogi* and even though Ravana was physically mightier than him. Rama conquered the self and pride which was beyond Ravana's capabilities. Along with this Gandhi was greatly influenced by Jesus Christ's teachings, Socrates sacrifices and the writings of Tolstoy. He stated:

“Jesus Christ, Daniel and Socrates represented the purest form of passive resistance or soul force. All these teachers counted their bodies as nothing in comparison to their soul. Tolstoy was the best and brightest (modern) exponent of the doctrine. He not only expounded it, but lived according to it.”³

The real power is the spiritual will of the liberated man. This power exists in every man, but it has to be evolved by breaking free from the inferior forms of human nature. There are three stages in the course of the evolution of the spiritual will. In the first stage, man possesses an egoistic self with all its dualities of life and death, pleasure and pain, good and evil and so on, as the basic foundation of egoistic consciousness. The real soul and self of man remain hidden from his intelligence on account of ignorance, because of its false identification with ego. It is the stage when the real soul is taken over completely by the ego and man lives a superficial life ignorant of his true being. In the second stage, the active soul of man is liberated from its false identification with his egoistic mind, and the egoistic self gets dissolved. The true self then gradually opens up to a sense of universality and selflessness. Then the higher active self of the soul within takes birth, with the appearance of a loving heart and a willing surrender of its energy to a life of service. Man is no more bound by his lower self of nature, ego and senses. He then recognizes his real self, which is no longer, troubled by the dualities of life and regards them as equal. In the evolution of self, this stage is the expression of self in the form of spiritual will which prepares man for the *sattwic* vision and the magnetic power of the self, the soul-force. The third is a complete

psychological transformation of self. When it takes place- ignorance is replaced by self-knowledge; fear, greed, lust, hatred and all such propensities are left far behind by universal love. A new vision of life in relation to infinite truth is created in which the difference between lower self and higher self disappears. This is the state of spiritual will when the soul becomes dynamic and soul-force is on the point of being created. This step is quite important for the normal man in the process of the evolution of the self, though it is not yet an integrated perfection.

Man possesses great potential and can reach the third stage of perfection when the soul-force is at its most potent. This is also the stage of self-realisation that only a chosen few can attain. Gandhi expressed it as the goal of his life. In Gandhi's autobiography, we find that he himself passed through these difficult stages gradually but with conviction. However, all men, even the lowest and the most sinful, can, if they will, enter the path of creating soul-force, if only there is a true self-surrender and an absolute un-egoistic faith in truth. But, of course, a decisive turn is necessary.

Soul-force is really what belongs to the soul. There are three inviolable truths- first, that the soul is imperishable and indivisible; second, that the body is transient and will be destroyed; and third, that duty cannot be put aside. Of these, duty in life is to be performed at any cost. That duty is towards our parents who gave us life and towards the society that provides us with sustenance for growth and development. We were led into this stream of existence through our parents and society. It is necessary that we awake to the

other two truths as well. One is 'I am not this mortal body', which is only the outer covering and is destined to be destroyed someday. The other truth is that 'I am the soul' that never dies, that cannot be destroyed and that pervades everything. When these truths are combined as a dynamic force, we attain the perfect truth which Gandhi called 'self-realisation' or seeing God face to face. If our mind awakens to these truths, it will not be difficult to perform our duty in life.

In most of the writings of Gandhi, soul-force is attached to the idea of satyagraha but Gandhi also combined thoughts of swaraj and non-violence with it. In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi connected swaraj with soul-force repeatedly. It was through this book that Gandhi proclaimed to the world the efficacy of soul-force. He says:

“In my opinion, it is a book which can be put into the hands of a child. It teaches the gospel of love in place of that of hate. It replaces violence with self-sacrifice. It pits soul-force against brute-force . . . If India adopted the doctrine of love as an active part of her religion and introduced it in her politics, Swaraj would descend upon India from heaven.”⁴

Gandhi warns his countrymen that brute-force would not solve the problems of the nation. It is not coherent with the culture of India. Swaraj could never be achieved through violent means but one could rely completely on the effectiveness of soul-force. According to him that freedom should not be gained through killing or injuring others i.e. the use of brute force, but rather it comes by dying or submitting to the suffering i.e. the soul-force. India could

achieve independence only through the use of soul force. In the words of Gandhi:

“Soul-force is love-force and the world is ruled by this force. If you want to free India through your strength, shower love on others. If you like being called the helper of the distressed, you must become the very images of tolerance, heroism, truth and other virtues. Mere show will never win us swaraj.”⁵

Non-violence is a force of the highest order. It is soul-force. Gandhi acknowledged the moral superiority of non-violence in terms of love, truth, suffering, justice and triumph of soul force over brute force. Soul exercises these naturally if the mind is able to control passion. Therefore, the success of non-violence depends on the state of soul and mind. Gandhi connects soul-force with non-violence as:

“Such a universal force necessarily makes no distinction between kinsmen and strangers, young and old, man and woman, friend and foe. The force to be so applied can never be physical. There is in it no room for violence. The only force of universal application can, therefore, be that of *Ahimsa* or Love. In other words it is soul-force”⁶

For exalting the soul over the body, we have to realise that the body is caught in the cycle of childhood, youth, old age and final decay. The body that changes every moment cannot be the true form. It has to be realised in practice that the body is like one's clothes. When the old clothes wear out, we go in for new ones. If the soul sticks to one body forever, the soul would be in a very

pitiable condition. That is why the destruction of the body becomes necessary and it cannot be a matter to grieve over.

Soul-force seeks to entirely blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting up against it a sharper edged weapon, but by disappointing the aggressor's expectations that the victim would be offering physical resistance. But the resistance of the soul-force eludes him. It at first dazzles him and at last compels recognition from him. This recognition does not humiliate him but uplifts him. This is an ideal state of soul-force.

Soul-force is not based on brute force or hatred. It does not aim at destroying the opponent. Suffering and trust are the attributes of the soul force. It is a process of self-purification. It seeks to convert even the tyrant or opponent and dissuade him from the path of hatred and violence, to accept the call of pure conscience and the supreme self. The man with soul-force has a resolve that he shall not fear anyone and shall bear ill will towards none. He shall conquer untruth by truth and in resisting untruth, he is impervious to all suffering. By overcoming the fear of death he would become fearless. He has to cultivate the capacity for sacrifice in order to be free from fear. One who has not overcome all fear cannot practice soul-force. Cowardice and soul-force cannot go together.

If a man sheds fear, he is never afraid of trusting the opponent. An implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of the creed of the man with soul-force. In the code of the man with soul-force, there is no such thing as surrender to brute force, as he believes in truth and non-violence as his creed.

He expects to invoke the goodness inherent in human nature by the force of his soul expressed through his truth, love and his willing suffering for the sake of his cause, and by his readiness to give up his life and his possessions willingly. In fact soul-force is a code of conduct for man if he is to live consistently with dignity and self-respect and at the same time make progress towards attainment of peace for which the soul yearns.

A man practicing soul-force needs to understand that he cannot claim that he is always in the right. For determining whether a particular thing is right or wrong, he should have a deliberate judgement. It is, therefore, necessary that he should not do a thing which he knows to be wrong or if he is not absolutely sure about his judgement. Otherwise he must be ready to bear the consequences of his wrong judgement. This is the basic condition for the use of soul-force as a weapon for self-defence or for upholding his dignity and self-respect. In this spirit soul-force is the ingenuity of man. Gandhi says:

“No man can claim that he is absolutely in the right or that a particular thing is wrong because he thinks so, but it is wrong for him so long as that is his deliberate judgment. It is therefore clear that he should not do that which he knows to be wrong, and suffer the consequence whatever it may be. This is the key to the use of soul-force.”⁷

For developing and using the soul-force, it is not necessary that one should have physical strength. The real strength comes from the soul and an indomitable ‘will’. Gandhi said that:

“I, therefore, swear and shall continue to swear by non-violence i.e. by satyagraha or soul-force. In it physical incapacity is no handicap and even a frail woman or a child can put herself or himself on equal terms against a giant, armed with the most powerful weapons.”⁸

The test and condition of full awakening of soul-force, as Gandhi conceived it, is that it penetrates every part of one's being and every moment of his life. The recognition of soul-force must amount to a living faith and not mere intellectual grasp. The living faith in soul-force means that man will refuse to do that which his conscience forbids him to do. He would not submit to any humiliations. For him, the earthly possessions may be necessary for the upkeep of his body but they have nothing to do with the soul. He must not be caught in the snare of greed, which is at the root of violence and evil. A weak-minded man can never be a man with soul-force.

It is impossible to advance, to grow and to fulfill human aspirations without resorting to the principle of non-violence, which Gandhi has placed before humanity as the highest and best law of conduct, as also a powerful weapon to fight against evil forces. It is soul-force that is an effective means to resolve our problems and unite mankind in a mutual relationship. On the other hand, the brute force solves no problems and breaks human relations as we witness today. Despite widespread violence in the present day world, it is hoped that someday humanity would realise the efficacy of soul-force in human affairs and, at any rate realise that the ideal of soul-force ought to lead us to a better life and society.

There is no royal route for cultivating soul-force, except through living and practicing the creed of truth and non-violence in one's life. This, of course, presupposes tremendous perseverance and through cleansing of one's self of all impurities for mastering the greatest spiritual force of the soul. Gandhi says:

“without self-purification the observance of the law of Ahimsa must remain an empty dream. God can never be realised by one who is not pure of heart. Self-purification therefore must mean purification in all the walks of life. And purification being highly infectious, purification of oneself necessarily leads to the purification of one's surroundings. But the path of self-purification is hard and steep. To attain to perfect purity one has to become absolutely passion-free in thought, speech and action; to rise above the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion.”⁹

Gandhi was of the opinion that soul-force is key for a woman to be able to walk in the society shoulder to shoulder with men. Women cannot deny such duties thinking that they are weak. In his view, the soul can never be depicted as weak; it is the body which may be weak. Through soul-force, a woman conscious of her dignity as woman sheds lustre on her womanhood. The woman, who is thinking that she is weak in body, becomes weak in mind too. There is enough evidence available in the ancient Indian scriptures that conveys the soul-force of women such as Sita and Draupadi. Just as the power of human intelligence is at par over brute physical strength so also a man's intellectual and physical strength is quite helpless before the soul-force a woman.

Fearlessness is the most essential requisite of spiritual life. A coward can never be moral. Fearlessness connotes freedom from all external fears- fear of losing wealth, comforts or even the fear of losing one's life. But fearlessness does not mean arrogance or aggressiveness. That is a sign of fear. Fearlessness presupposes calmness and peace of mind. In an effort to evolve soul-force, anger, hatred, selfishness, pride and such other propensities must give way to higher values like love, renunciation and self-sacrifice. Otherwise soul-force would be impossible to attain.

Greed and attachment are the root cause of violence in society as, according to Gita, attachment is the root of all evil. Greed is another form of attachment. Therefore, one has to get rid of the impulses of greed and attachment related to the body and the worldly possessions. Even fearlessness can be attained only by one who has realised the heights of freedom from such delusions. Then one can progress towards the goal of cultivating soul-force through determined and constant endeavour and by increasing confidence within oneself. Self-discipline or rule over self by the supreme soul is a primary condition for cultivating soul-force. In the process of cultivating soul-force, the ego-self must be reduced to zero, which means that the lower self or the ego self must be liberated from the clutches of desires and the forces of nature like lust, greed, attachment and so on, by gaining perfect control over the senses. Differences of opinion prevail on the question of the goal of human life. Some people give greater importance to the body claiming that man is a body and not a soul thereby seeking maximum sensual pleasure. Their values in life are

power, self and other worldly possessions. They do not think of anything beyond that. On the other hand, for those who identify man with his soul, and the body as peripheral, the goal of life is determined in terms of spiritual values, i.e. self-realisation or the development of soul. When the individual begins to perceive and recognize the value and power of the soul in his acts, in him as well as in other, he is on his way to transcending the limitations of his ego and discovering his soul-force.

(c) **Brahmacharya**

“Brahmacharya means control of all the organs of sense. He who attempts to control only one organ and allows all the others free play is bound to find his effort futile.”

(CWMG, Vol.49, P.422)

Brahmacharya is central to Gandhi's ethical philosophy in such a way that the other ethical concepts are either incomplete or are lacking in their credibility without its inclusion. Brahmacharya, literally means- self-control. Gandhi describes this concept in its most comprehensive sense in the *Harijan*:

“The great living force which we call God. But it is self-evident that it requires hard labour to find out those laws. That law in short is termed *brahmacharya*. So Gandhi defines brahmacharya as “that correct way which leads to Brahman.”¹

Etymologically brahmacharya means the discipline which leads to the realisation of *Brahman*. It is constituted of two words *Brahma* which means

truth and *charya* that means course of conduct so brahmacharya means conduct adopted for the search of truth. Brahmacharya refers to a course of conduct adopted to seek *Brahman* or truth. It can be said that the realisation of *Brahman* or truth is possible through brahmacharya. This realisation is impossible without complete control of the senses. It implies the control of all our organs and desires. Thus brahmacharya means control in thought, word and action. Realisation of truth and gratification of the lower self are incompatible with one another. Brahmacharya therefore, is translated as the control of all sense organs and all passions. Thus brahmacharya is the discipline and means for the realisation of truth. Gandhi said that:

“The full and proper meaning of Brahmacharya is search of Brahman. Brahman pervades every being and can therefore be searched by dividing into and realising the inner self. This realisation is impossible without complete control of the senses. Brahmacharya thus means control in thought, word and action, all the senses at all times and in all places.”²

Gandhi started practicing brahmacharya since 1901. The roots of this passion lie in his formative years. It was in South Africa that the idea took hold of him completely based on his personal conviction and not as a result of any external influence. Jaladhar Pal mentioned in his book, *The Moral Philosophy of Gandhi* that Gandhi came across *Patanjali* along with other scriptures in 1903 long before which the ideal of brahmacharya was sprouting in his mind.³ For him, brahmacharya was wider concept than mere celibacy. It constituted an entire philosophy and a moral imperative to be observed in thought, word and

deed- indeed Gandhi's sure road to *nirvana*. He took a vow of lifelong celibacy in 1906. Gandhi wrote in his autobiography:

“Brahmacharya, which I had been observing willynilly since 1900, was sealed with a vow in the middle of 1906.”⁴

S.S. Gill wrote in his book, *A Sublime of Failure*, that, brahmacharya originates from the need of self-restraint and self-discipline for a religious man. But its philosophic roots go much deeper. In the orient, matter is regarded as the seat of all evil, and it is necessary to extinguish all passions emanating from the material body to attain self-realisation.⁵

Brahamcharya was no doubt an ideological weapon. The motive of Gandhi behind this is the service to humanity and not any spiritual goal, *moksha* or liberation and for the rest of his life he propagated the virtues of celibacy like a missionary. Gandhi said that selfless love must be free of lust and for this reason he took the oath of brahmacharya.

Self-restraint is the first element of brahmacharya that means control of all the five sense organs; the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin under all circumstances. Hence control of the senses is the first feature of brahmacharya. Secondly, Gandhi said that brahmacharya is a mental condition. The outward attitude of man is the mirror of the inner state. For brahmacharya, it is necessary that the heart should be free from ill-will. Brahmacharya is a mental condition. It is not possible to observe brahmacharya if one harbours evil thoughts in mind because:

“Where the mind wanders, the body must follow sooner or later.”⁶

The perfect stage of brahmacharya is that evil thoughts should not occur not even unexpected dreams. A healthy soul inhabits a healthy body and complete mastery over all the senses at all times, in all places in thought, word and action is essential.

Thirdly, brahmacharya is essential not only for the attainment of inner freedom but also external freedom that is swaraj. To face the problems of the external world it is necessary to follow the vow of brahmacharya fully and perfectly. Gandhi adhered to the idea of brahmacharya in every walk of life and treated brahmacharya as an instrument for the attainment of external freedom.

Fourthly, the religious implication of brahmacharya is that it ascribes godliness to the brahmachari, and without it one cannot realise God. That is to say, brahmacharya is indispensable for realisation of self or God or truth. Gandhi said:

“Observing brahmacharya is one of the means to the end which is seeing Brahma. Without brahmacharya no one may expect to see Him, and without seeing Him one cannot observe brahmacharya to perfection.”⁷

Fifthly, Perfect brahmacharya means complete control over all the senses, thought, speech, and action. The complete control over everything of his being enhances the physical, mental and spiritual power of an individual. Gandhi says, the brahmachari of my conception will be healthy and will easily

live long. He will not even suffer from so much as a headache. Mental and physical work will not cause fatigue and he will be ever bright, never slothful. Outward neatness will be an exact reflection of the inner. Thus, to Gandhi, perfect brahmacharya is a godly attribute that transforms an individual into a steadfast one.

Sixthly, brahmachari, according to Gandhi, will rise above the consciousness of sex, and infuse the purity of sexlessness into a woman sharing the same bed, if occasion demands. In short, the concept of brahmacharya altered the status of womenfolk in his mind and opened a new horizon before his eyes, namely the liberation of women in general.

Seventhly, married brahmacharya may sound contradictory to the western ear. Manu prescribed four stages of life. During the first quarter (brahmacharya) of life celibacy was regarded essential for all-both for students studying the Vedas and also for one who would devote himself exclusively to the realisation of God. In the second stage of householders (*garhasthya*) every healthy man should marry and rear a family. At this stage too an individual has to exercise sex-control by being loyal to his partner, and through observance of some other restrictions.

According to Gandhi the married couple may also lead the life of brahmacharya for there is no restriction in observing brahmacharya. The only condition would be that the married couple should avoid sexual union, except for the purpose of procreation in which case it would not be inconsistent with brahmacharya. Gandhi wished to do away with the lustful-aspect of sexual-

behaviour. He further imposed the condition of mutual consent on sexual relations between husband and wife. If either of them disagrees the act should be considered immoral. In other words, sex life of married couples was to be regulated as a matter of moral duty.⁸

Brahmacharya is a comprehensive word. It is not merely abstinence from sexual intercourse. One who merely controls his sex and leaves his other organs without control, is not a brahmachari at all. A true brahmachari is one whose speech, thought and action all reveal his self-control. Curbing of lust is also essential for a man who hopes to rule over self. This requires more self-force. Gandhi said:

“Self force comes only through God’s grace, and God’s grace never descends upon a man who is a slave to lust.”⁹

Self-control is the law of our being. Power comes with the preservation of the vitality that is responsible for creation of life. Pyarelal mentioned in his book, *Mahatma Gandhi*:

“It is the way of life which leads us to Brahma-God. It includes full control over the process of reproduction. The control must be in thought, word and deed. If the thought is not under control the other two have no value. For one whose thought is under control, the other is mere child’s play.”¹⁰

It is clear from the above discussion that Gandhi did not treat it as merely a utopian ideal. He did not recommend the adoption of the recommendations for a brahmachari as an escape from society or to get rid of the responsibilities of the social life. On the contrary, he stressed that the brahmachari should lead a

social life observing self-control so that the entire energy is harnessed and utilized in the service of society. Whenever they have desire for children they may have sexual intercourse, but there should be no intercourse for mere gratification. Moreover, there should be no sex-consciousness.

Here one may raise a question as to how far Gandhi himself was successful in realising brahmacharya. Before an answer is ventured it is essential to point out that for Gandhi brahmacharya was an ideal state which could never be completely realised. He compares it with “euclid's line which exists only in imagination, never capable of being physically drawn.”¹¹ Similarly, brahmacharya may never be attained completely. However, we may approach nearer and nearer to it. After practicing brahmacharya for 18 years Gandhi wrote in *Navajivan*, that during sleep he sometimes had unexpected dreams which arose from a craving for pleasure previously enjoyed. So he believed that absolute renunciation or absolute brahmacharya is not possible. However it is an ideal which should be persistently pursued and which would inspire us to a higher and higher conduct.

Gandhi is conscious of the difficulties that arise in the practice of brahmacharya for an average man. He, therefore, recommends marriage for all those who find this ideal inaccessible. However the married couple should lead a life of self-control as far as possible and should regard brahmacharya as the supreme way of life.

Gandhi had recommended certain rules for the realisation of brahmacharya. The first rule refers to the control of thought. Thoughts about

sexual pleasure and sexual desires should be eradicated from the mind. One should not allow his thoughts to wander over the objects of sensuous pleasures. *Japa* or the repetition of the name of God is a great support when such thoughts haunt the mind of man. Gandhi said:

“Let him repeat Ramanama with all his heart regularly everyday, and ask for divine grace.”¹²

Secondly, one should read clean books. Unclean literature leads to temptation for gratification of the lower self. And this gratification may lead to unbridled indulgence in which man is completely exhausted. These two rules deal with mental purity. But they are not sufficient.

The third rule requires that the body should always be occupied in some constructive work. To stay idle is to indulge in laziness for laziness obstructs self-restraint.¹³ The *yogic* exercises are also useful for brahmacharya.

Fourthly, a man should control his palate, as a pre-requisite for controlling other senses and passions. There is a saying that, ‘a man becomes what he eats’. So, one should take food only with a view to sustaining the body. The aim of man’s life is self-realisation or the realisation of God. The body is given only as the means for that realisation. It should not be made as an instrument for self-gratification. Gandhi wrote:

“A brahmachari must needs control his palate. He must eat to live, and not for enjoyment. He must see only clean things and close his eyes before anything unclean. It is thus a sign of polite breeding to walk with one’s eyes towards the ground and not wandering about from object to object. A brahmachari will likewise hear nothing

obscene or unclean, smell no strong, stimulating things. The smell of clean earth is far sweeter than the fragrance of artificial scents and essences. Let the aspirants to brahmacharya also keep his hands and feet engaged in all the waking hours in healthful activity. Let him also fast occasionally.”¹⁴

Lastly, a man should relate to every woman in the image of his mother, sister or daughter, and likewise a woman should relate to all men as her father, brother or son. This way of thinking will greatly help in following brahmacharya and will lead to self-realisation. In short, brahmacharya is not the principle of asceticism according to Gandhi. In the broader sense of the term, it does not preach withdrawal from society nor does it renounce the claims of society. Its complete orientation is towards positive social service and love of humanity. Gandhi himself did not renounce society when he took the vow of brahmacharya, but devoted his life more actively and single-mindedly to the service of his country and humanity.

Brahmacharya is an integral part of truth, and it is also related with other vows at the same time. And though truth acquires more centrality in relation to the other vows, they have their own importance as they are organically related to each other.

Gandhi said that universal love cannot be achieved without the practice of brahmacharya. His arguments in support of this assertion are as follows: If a man is not a brahmachari or celibate or chaste, he is either leading the life of a *grahasth* with his wife or he is leading a life of indulgence. In the former case his love for his wife would be somewhat exclusive. His wife will occupy the

special share of his love, which will obstruct universal love. If he is an unscrupulously indulgent then his life is sure to be completely ruined. He will have no mental peace. Obviously, it will not be possible for him to attain the state of universal love. To put it in Gandhi's own words:

“Such person cannot rise to the height of universal love, or look upon all mankind as kith and kin. For they have created a boundary wall round their love.” ¹⁵

Thus brahmacharya for Gandhi is the gateway to altruism or the universal love.

Brahmacharya also assumed a pivotal role in the concept of non-violence. For, ahimsa means universal love. A votary of ahimsa cannot marry. If he marries then that love gets narrowed down to his love for his family and withdrawing him from universal love. Even married people can tread in the path of ahimsa by observing brahmacharya i.e. by sharing the bonds of brother and sister instead of a husband and wife. Then they are free to serve the entire humanity and move in the direction of the realisation of truth. A brahmachari must consider woman, as an incarnation of the divine Mother. Gandhi wrote:

“A brahmachari's reaction to a living image and to a bronze statue is one and the same.” ¹⁶

Brahmacharya is also a necessary element for the life of a satyagrahi. Gandhi recommended celibacy for a true satyagrahi. But for the common man he prescribed marriage. Again he warns all against the evils of sexual indulgence. Marriage is a sacrament and must always be guided by discipline. He said that marriage and sex should be performed morally. Gandhi mentioned:

“Human society is a ceaseless growth, an unfoldment in terms of spirituality. If so, it must be based on ever-increasing restraint upon the demands of the flesh. Thus marriage must be considered to be sacrament imposing discipline upon the partners, restricting them to the physical union only among themselves and for the purpose only of procreation when both the partners desire and are prepared for it.”¹⁷

If the leader of satyagraha is an almost perfect brahmachari practically nothing would be impossible for him. To relinquish all desires would strengthen the whole being of the individual; physical, mental and spiritual which gives him the power unattainable by any other means. Complete brahmacharya means complete control over thought. Gandhi mentioned in *Harijan*:

“And since thought is the root of all speech and action, the quality of the latter corresponds to that of the former. Hence perfectly controlled thought is itself power of the highest potency and can become self-acting.”¹⁸ Again, “thought-control means maximum of work with minimum of energy.”¹⁹

Moreover, the realisation of truth and non-violence which means the realisation of the universal love through the service of mankind is impossible except for a brahmachari.

Thus Gandhi's prescription of brahmacharya as a cardinal virtue was a necessity of the age. He foresaw, and perhaps aptly, that the movement of liberation would be impossible unless the satyagrahis were free from the chains

of lust and family bondage. As discussed above, according to Gandhi, brahmacharya bestows unlimited physical and spiritual power on the individual. It transforms an individual into a superman, a steadfast one whom Gandhi sought fervently for the movement of liberation and thereby for the service of humanity. Further, Gandhi is candid enough to admit that brahmacharya in all its perfection is beyond human reach. Perhaps, the substance would be that neither sexual excess nor total abstinence is good for man. The second development of our personality lies in a balanced and harmonious manifestation of all the qualities constitutive of our being. However our duty should be to minimize sexual opportunity, to regulate and tame sexual instinct as far as practicable. To say so is not to underrate the virtue of brahmacharya for it is just an admission of fact. Ultimately the virtue of brahmacharya as an ideal would in any case be an ever shining light, and an infallible aid towards the realisation of God or truth.

Chapter VI

The Centrality of the Religious Impulse in Gandhi's Thoughts

“Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion, which I certainly prize above all other religion, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one’s very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself.”

(*Young India*, 12.5.1920, CWMG, Vol.20, P.307)

Religion is a broad term and is interpreted differently over the world. Every religion has a unique understanding of itself. For instance in the Indian context, the sanskrit word *dharma*, sometimes translated as religion, also means law. Most of the religions believe in the existence of God, with a sense of God, as an omnipotent supernatural force being central with only a few religions not believing in the concept of God. Religion is best viewed when morality is associated along with it. In the Indian context not only indigenous religions but several other major and minor religions of the world coexist. Indian society does not insulate itself to other religions, not even to atheism on

account of its spirituality which inculcates a tolerance and encourages the coexistence of different religions.

The origin of religion can be traced back to the beginning of human evolution, seen as a permanent relationship between the human being and the universe. Different views on the idea of religion have been worked out by M.V. Nadkarni in his book, *Ethics for our Times: Essay in Gandhian Perspective* as:

“Religion is something that is born out of the deepest instincts of humanity, and not imposed by the superstitious fear of the priest or the anger of God. A.E Taylor thinks that religion originates in ancestor worship and is a primitive attempts to explain the phenomena of nature. Durkheim attempts to make “totemism”, the matrix of all religion and society, as the real object of religious cult. J.G. Frazer, author of *The Golden Bough*, holds that religion was adopted as a means of mastering life when magic did not deliver the goods. Sigmund Freud sees the origin of religion in an “Oedipus complex” in the primitive horde and in the projection of fears and wishful thinking. According to Rudolf Otto, the origin of religion is neither a historical problem nor a psychological one nor a sociological one. The awareness of an unknown power or reality, the idea of something holy and sacred, is the essence of religion. Religious consciousness points to something beyond humanity. Reverence for or worship of the unknown is the unique essence of religion, through this too is mingled with ethical and aesthetic categories.”¹

When it comes to Gandhi's relationship to religion we notice that his uniqueness lies in preserving what was of significance in that which was traditional and yet an acceptance of the radical changes that would benefit human kind. Besides being a politician and a national leader, he was a *yogi* and an ascetic. To Gandhi religion is a belief, which he practiced to the best of his ability all through his life. It seems quite evident that religion worked as an impulse in Gandhi's activities, not only in his personal life but also in the realm of political, social and economic life, For him a religion which did not concern itself with every aspect of life can be no religion at all. That being a fact, no action and deed that a religion propagates can be adequate which does not take into account the entire conduct, both in the personal and the social life of its follower. Gandhi was born a hindu but his hinduism was his own, never being an hindrance in accepting the teachings of different religions.

Gandhi's assessment of a true religion lay in its being most tolerant, free of dogmas, allowing the largest scope for self-expression, holding room for the amalgamation with other prevalent religions and upholding the principle of universal compassion. Gandhi did not accept the concept of a universal or perfect religion which would be universally applicable. In his opinion all religions should co-exist and retain their validity equally for they all stand for the well-being of human beings. Gandhi encourages knowledge of the comparative study of different religions which would further encourage an acceptance of and tolerance for the differences between diverse religions.

Though Gandhi was not a very religious minded person in his formative years, he gradually and increasingly developed respect and regard for religions, mainly through the influence and example of his father. Hindus, Jains, Parsis, Buddhists and Muslims used to visit his father both for religious as well as political discussions. Gandhi says, "In Rajkot, however, I got an early grounding in toleration for all branches of Hinduism and sister religions."² So his home was a kind of 'dialogue centre.' Even though Gandhi grew up in a devout hindu household, steeped in *vaishnavism* and was also exposed to strong Jain influences, his acquaintance even with his own religion was very meagre. It was in 1888, when he arrived in London to study law, that he read the Bhagavad Gita, the most precious book of hinduism. Here Gandhi also came into contact with the books such as *Key to Theosophy*, The Bible, especially The New Testament and the *Light of Asia* by Sir Edwin Arnold. Even at that time he began to identify and unifying the teachings of the Gita, the *Light of Asia* and the *Sermon on the Mount* in the Bible and thus initiated himself into the practice of an inter-religious spirituality. With this background Gandhi continued his experiments with religion and God.

Among the hindu sacred books that have had an influence on Gandhi, the Bhagavad Gita, which is the most valued expression of the *Mahabharata*, comes first. Gandhi appreciated the Gita deeply. He declared:

"The Gita has been a Mother to me ever since I became acquainted with it I turn to it for guidance in every difficulty, and the desired guidance has always been forthcoming."³

According to Gandhi the central teaching of the Gita is *anasakti* or selfless action, which is the ultimate method of attaining self-realisation. For Gandhi *anasakti* includes and transcends *ahimsa*. "He who would be *anasakta* (selfless) has necessarily to practice non-violence in order to attain the state of selflessness. Ahimsa is, therefore, a necessary preliminary: it is included in *anasakti*, it does not go beyond it."⁴ According to Gandhi, Gita is not a historical work, but a philosophical and ethical work. Its subject matter is simply the realisation of *Brahman* and the means to it. Thus hinduism, especially the Gita has played a vital role in moulding Gandhi's religious philosophy.

Gandhi was acquainted with Islam at an early age through the muslim friends of his father. Later he read Irwin's version of Prophet Muhammad and was greatly impressed by it. Gandhi held Islam to be a religion of peace and considered peace to be its prime objective. Gandhi appreciated the idea behind the practice of fasting recommended for the followers of Islam. He once said that he learned from Muhammad that only he could fast who had inexhaustible faith in God.⁵ In Tolstoy farm he encouraged each one to fast according to his own religion. Although there were only few muslims, they were encouraged to fast according to the dictates of their religion. He extols the distinctive contribution of Islam as its "unadulterated belief in the oneness of God and a practical application of the truth of the Brotherhood of man for those who are nominally within its fold."⁶ Gandhi had a deep regard for Islam and its adherents and sacrificed his life for hindu-muslim unity.

Gandhi's initiated exposure to Christianity was negative and he developed a dislike for it because of the undesirable approach of the missionaries towards hindus impressing upon them to convert into Christianity. Later Gandhi's ideas about Christianity underwent a shift in approach. It was in London that he began to read the Bible for the first time. The New Testament, particularly the *Sermon on the Mount*, went straight to his heart. It was in South Africa that he studied Christian literature intensively though it was mainly Protestant in nature. As a result of this pursuit, the Bible became an indispensable influence on him. However he had serious difficulties with regard to the accepted interpretation of the Bible. Gandhi did not believe that Jesus is the only incarnate Son of God and that salvation could be secured only by becoming a Christian. For him the Bible was no more inspired than the sacred books of other religions. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ formed a deep influence on Gandhi. For Gandhi the *Sermon on the Mount* and the Gita imparted the same message to him, and he says:

“Today supposing I was deprived of the Gita and forgot all its contents, but had a copy of the Sermon, I should derive the same joy from it as I do from the Gita.”⁷

The ethical teachings of Jesus commanded the reverence of Gandhi. The *Sermon on the Mount* considerably influenced his doctrine of satyagraha and non-violence. He called Jesus the Prince among satyagrahies, because his life was an exemplification of the purest form of passive resistance or soul-force.⁸ According to Gandhi, non-violence is the central teaching of the Bible and

Jesus non-violence is par excellence. The influence of Christianity on Gandhi was profound and he lived up to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Gandhi regarded Buddhism and Jainism as off-shoots of hinduism.⁹ Gandhi calls Buddha a *Hindu of Hindus* and holds that he broadened the scope of hinduism by giving it a new life and new interpretation. According to him Buddha was “saturated with the best that was in Hinduism, and he gave life to some of the teachings that were buried in the vedas and which were overgrown with weeds.”¹⁰ Buddha's life of renunciation and his doctrine of compassion and toleration had influenced Gandhi immensely. Gandhi says: “Many friends consider that I am expressing in my own life the teachings of Buddha. I accept their testimony and I am free to confess that I am trying my level best to follow these teachings.”¹¹ Gandhian life of simplicity and voluntary poverty closely reflect the ethical principles of Buddhism.

Jainism, however, had a greater influence on Gandhi. When his father died, mother Putlibai sought advice on family matters from Beeharji Swami, a Jain monk. Gandhi took three vows upon the advice of this Jain monk and then only was allowed to go to England for studies. The ascetic tendency in Gandhi; concepts of vegetarianism, non-violence and his recourse to vows and fasts are the chief manifestations of the influence of Jainism. According to Jainism the five cardinal vows (*Pancha-mahavratas*) constitute the right conduct. They are *Ahimsa* (Non-violence), *Satya* (Truth), *Asteyam* (Non-stealing), *Brahamacharya* (Chastity) and *Aparigraha* (Non-attachment).¹² Gandhi accepted this code of conduct and prescribed it to the inmates of his ashram.

Besides, in his philosophical perspective Gandhi was profoundly influenced by the Jainist theory of *Anekantavada* that advocates multifaceted manifestation of the reality. Under the influence of Jainism he took up several fasts unto death. He absorbed the great ideals of Jainism and purified it. Jain asceticism was directed towards the goal of spiritual perfection for the individual. Gandhi considered it essential for the eightfold path and related it with the code of conduct for liberation from this world of miseries.¹³

Towards the end of the second year of his studies in England, Gandhi learnt about theosophy and came in contact with Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Annie Beasant and to their writings.¹⁴ The acquaintance with Theosophy stimulated in Gandhi the desire to read books on hinduism and thus to clear doubts about the hindu religion. Daniel Mangalath opines that “Gandhi's views on the relationship between man and man, his work for the Hindu-Muslim unity and his uncompromising stand against untouchability were a result of his contact with the theosophist”¹⁵

The days preceding the British rule in India are characterized generally as a period of peaceful co-existence of various religions. Instances of occasional feuds did not affect the harmonious relationship among them, as those conflicts were caused more by the political ambitions of the rulers rather than matters relating to religion.¹⁶ Diverse beliefs, faiths and customs did not come in the way of development of harmonious relationship, since acceptance of each other's religion was a significant trend among members of different communities in those days. The deterioration in communal harmony was a

development that occurred much later. It appears that the idea of communalism gained its strength with the coming of the British through their 'divide and rule' policy.¹⁷

In South Africa, Gandhi had a very good relationship with the muslims. He fought for the various issues of Indian muslims. It gave Gandhi the realisation that communal unity was imperative for achieving Indian freedom. The main communal tensions in India were between hindus and muslims. Gandhi himself admitted that the "Hindu-muslim problem is the problem of problems."¹⁸ Therefore, when Gandhi returned from South Africa, he devoted himself fully and wholeheartedly to solve communal conflicts whenever it arose. Gandhi felt that if Hindu-muslim unity was established, unity with other communities could easily be strengthened. Hindu-muslim conflict has remained a focal point of Indian politics since the days of India's freedom movement. Conflict and co-existence between Indian nationalists and communalists, both hindus and muslims, greatly influenced the course of Indian national movement; a relationship which, in later years of the freedom movement turned sharply antagonistic resulting into a vertical split in the movement and the partition of the country. The interplay of religion and politics has always appeared to be detrimental to the growth of secular nationalism. But the history of Indian freedom movement is full of such interplays and compromises and Gandhi's role in solving these conflicts was indeed historic. Far from being communal, Gandhi was a true secular leader, although deeply religious as an individual. The question of hindu-muslim unity

always remained at the centre of his thoughts and he dedicated his whole life for the cause of communal harmony.

In the early years of his life, Gandhi did not care much for religion, but he listened to discussions at home by devotees of Hinduism, Jainism and Islam about their different viewpoints. This early exposure to different religions helped him cultivate a mind open to ideas. Even though Gandhi's early experiences with Christianity were quite negative, those negative impressions did not force him close his mind against Christianity. He went through the Bible and especially, the *Sermon on the Mount*, which went straight into his heart. In spite of negative experiences, his readiness to learn further and alter his opinion and attitudes deserves appreciation. He concentrated more on the essence of religion or ideology. Gandhi was an embodiment of the moral, spiritual and religious values that India stood for from times immemorial as found in the *Rig Veda*. Values such as truth, non-violence, non-possession, concepts of celibacy, openness to other ideologies, universal brotherhood of man etc. that he lived and preached were not his own inventions. He assimilated these values from different religious scriptures and traditions. His openness and acceptance of positivity from diverse sources was one of the important characteristics of Gandhi that made him a unique spiritual leader.

Gandhi's acceptance of religion was so complete that his entire outlook and all decision making was guided through religion. He said:

“If I did not feel the presence of God within me, I see so much of misery and disappointment everyday that I would be a raving maniac.”¹⁹

Gandhi did not conceive religion and spirituality as one of the many activities of mankind. His spirituality is the quintessence of all his religious beliefs and attitudes as well as the culmination of his religious sensitivity. This is the distinctive character of Gandhi's idea of religion. Every evening after the prayer meeting he used to discuss problems - social, political, economic, moral, religious etc. For a man is all of these, everywhere and each and every moment of his life. Gandhi tried to spiritualize the whole society but he never lost sight of the importance of the material aspect of man's life. Thus his entire conception of life and religion was an integrated one. Gandhi believed that religion must pervade each one of our actions. He says:

“You must watch my life - how I live, eat, sit, talk, behave in general. The sum total of all of those in me is my religion.”²⁰

Religion is not a way of concentrating on certain things, but a way of looking at all things. According to Gandhi the basic meaning of religion is ‘that which binds’. Therefore the purpose of religion is to unite. And this unity is with God and others and so Gandhi states that “religion binds man to God and man to man.”²¹ Thus religion helps one to have a proper and peaceful relationship with oneself, others and God.

For Gandhi, religion does not mean any particular historical religion. It is that religion which underlies all religions, which brings us face to face with our Maker. Gandhi is clear about the transcending nature of religion. Therefore he says:

“It is not the Hindu religion which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself.”²²

Religion was the very core of Gandhi's life. He says:

“I could not live for a single second without religion I go further and say that every activity of man of religion must be derived from his religion because religion means being bound to God, that is to say, God rules your every breath.”²³

He considered religion as the root from which all things spring out, with every action being fearless, free and selfless. This kind of actions alone farewell for the mankind and therefore make the present condition better. The whole being of Gandhi was permeated with commitment to religion which then became the chief source of Gandhi's activities.

Plurality of religions is inevitable. Gandhi believed that, “in theory, since there is one God, there can be only one religion. But in practice, no two persons I have known have an identical conception of God. Therefore, there will, perhaps, always be different religions answering to different temperaments.”²⁴ Gandhi says, “religion is one tree with many branches. As branches you may say religions are many, but as tree, religion is only one.”²⁵

But this one supreme religion while it transcends particular religions, does not supersede them. Gandhi said, "religion means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe. It is out less real because it is unseen. This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam. Christianity, etc. It does not supersede them. It harmonises them and gives them reality."²⁶

For Gandhi, man without religion is man without roots. Therefore, religion is the basis on which all life structures have to be erected, if life is to be real.²⁷ According to Gandhi, religion has to be lived every moment of one's life either by reason, or by instinct. And in doing so man acknowledges some sort of relationship with the Divine. Even the agnostics or atheists, who say they have nothing to do with religion, admit the moral order because they associate something good with its observance and something bad with non-observance. He compares them to "a man saying that he breathes but that he has no nose."²⁸ Thus according to Gandhi, religion is an essential aspect for human beings and universal in nature.

After a long search after truth, Gandhi came to certain fundamental conclusions, which are the core of his religious philosophy. The first one is that all religions are essentially one. However there is not just a single path that leads to God but several approaches that are open for those who are humble and pure of heart.²⁹ Hence there will be as many religions as there are hearts to approach the truth. There are no two persons who have identical conceptions of God, for He is beyond our reason and beyond the grasp of knowledge. So different religions are the different roads that converge on the same point.

Hence, what we need is not mere tolerance but mutual respect towards each other as pilgrims who move towards the same goal. The followers of other religions are to be loved and respected as the members of one's own family. This respect for other religions is our duty because our own religion is as perfect or imperfect as others. Moreover, this attitude towards other religions will help us to assimilate what is good in them, thereby enriching our faith further.

The second characteristic is that all religions are true. Gandhi believed that all religions are 'more or less perfect', because whatever man makes may be imperfect. The perfection is attributed only to God. Gandhi says:

“My Hindu instinct tells me that all religions are more or less true. All proceed from the same God, but all are imperfect because they have come down to us through imperfect human instrumentality.”³⁰

Each one is right from one's own standpoint. So truth is the exclusive property of no single scripture. Gandhi considered the scriptures not as of Divine origin but as inspired. Since they are inspired and lead to the truth, they contain truth. All religions are more or less perfect for they all proceed from the same God, and at the same time they are imperfect due to human intervention.

The third characteristic is a corollary of the earlier two, as all religions are one and more or less true, i.e., they are equal and command the same respect. Hence he believed in the *sarvadharmā samābhava* i.e. having equal regard for all faiths and creeds. Gandhi says, "For me, all the principal religions are equal in the sense that they are all true. They are supplying a felt want in

the spiritual progress of humanity."³¹ When he says that all religions are true and equal, he does not necessarily mean to say that they are equally true in religious terms or that they are absolutely true. While discussing the point all religions are true, we have seen that all religions are imperfect. The equality of religions is also explained on the same basis. All religions are equal but at the same time all are imperfect. After studying different religions, Gandhi developed a view of equi-mindedness to all religions. The inner codes of all religions are same but they differ in their creed and cult. While all religions are equally true, no one can claim superiority over others. Thus he is against religious conversions that are made through preaching. However he was not against conversions that were made by one's own inner choice and conviction. Such conversions are indeed a real transformation of one's life.

As we discussed earlier, the essential elements of religions are creed, cult and code of conduct. For Gandhi, a real human being must be moral. "He, who is not prepared to order his life in unquestioning obedience to the laws of morality, cannot be said to be a man in the full sense of the word."³² This is valid all the more with regard to religion. According to Gandhi, religion and morality are intimately related. "True religion and true morality are inseparably bound together. Religion is to morality what water is to the seed that is sown in the soil."³³ Gandhi does not consider those people religious who often violate the moral laws. But, in his opinion, those who lead a good moral life are really religious, because the essence of religion is morality. To judge whether a doctrine is religious or irreligious, Gandhi's criterion is morality. "I reject any

religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality. I tolerate unreasonable religious sentiment when it is not immoral.”³⁴

All religious scriptures have laid down certain moral precepts for human life. The ethical principles of all religions are basically the same. “Religious practices and dogmas may differ, but the principles of ethics must be the same in all religions.”³⁵ Unless we live according to these moral precepts, we cease to be religious. According to Gandhi, there is no such thing as religion overriding morality. Man for instance, cannot be untruthful, cruel and incontinent and claim to have God on his side.³⁶ Gandhi's conception of religion is called 'Ethical Religion' because the essence of religion according to him is morality, and because religion is a relation to God and to man and he held them to be synonymous. Though Gandhi studied more or less all the world religions and had great tolerance towards all religions he did not accept any religion that was in conflict with morality.

When some good is done, it does not mean that it is religiously or morally good. According to him an act, which is done consciously, intending good and without the purpose of making profit, becomes moral. When one observes the laws of morality for their own sake and not for any selfish end, he can be regarded as religious. A good religious man follows morality regardless of gain or loss, of life or death and he will even be ready to sacrifice his life. Such a morality can subsist only with the strength of religion. "So long as the seed of morality is not watered by religion, it cannot sprout. Without water it withers and ultimately perishes."³⁷ When it is watered by religion, it will not be

like the cloud that is driven out by the wind; instead, he stands firm and does what is right and good. He believed that man's highest duty in life is to serve mankind and take his share in bettering its conditions. This is the true worship and true prayer.³⁸ Doing good to mankind is the highest morality and it is the essence of all moral laws.

According to Gandhi, though there are different religions in the world, there is only one God. Different religions may call Him by different names but essentially He is one and the same. "The Allah of Islam is the same as the God of Christians and the Ishwara of Hindus."³⁹ Gandhi refutes the accusation that Hindus believe in many gods and are idolators. He points out even the vedas teach about only one God.⁴⁰ There is a law that abides and governs everything in the universe. This law is God Himself. Therefore, for Gandhi, God is not a person but an 'Idea'. "I do not regard God as a person ... God's Law and God are not different things or facts in the sense that an earthly king and his laws are different. Because God is an Idea, Law Himself."⁴¹ Though Gandhi repeatedly affirmed that God is an impersonal principle, in practice, he related himself to God as to a person. He addressed God as 'You', prayed to Him, sought His grace and mercy, believed in His providence and protection. Later on Gandhi understood God as Truth.

Initially Gandhi said that God is Truth. According to him man tries to comprehend God by giving names and forms. There can be as many names of God as there are people who speak about God. "Deep down in me I say God may be Love but, God is Truth."⁴² According to Gandhi, love has many

meanings and human love in the sense of passion could become a degrading thing also. But there is no double meaning with regard to Truth, and even atheists are aware of the necessity and power of Truth. Gandhi used the sanskrit word satya for truth, which means that which is. Gandhi identified reality with God and God with Truth. "Truth is That which Is, and Untruth is That which is not."⁴³ Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why sat or satya is the right name for God.⁴⁴ The insight that 'God is Truth' occurred to him as an original intuition and had the certainty of a personal experience.

Gandhi realised that the word 'God' was understood differently with different backgrounds and numerous crimes were committed in the name of God.⁴⁵ Moreover, there were people who rejected the traditional idea of God. But even atheists accepted the necessity and power of truth. Because of these facts Gandhi changed the emphasis from God to Truth.

Though Gandhi defines God as Truth, according to him, the only means to attain this Truth is love. And since the means and the end are convertible, he concludes that God is love. Gandhi could not find any higher way of worshipping God than by serving the poor and identifying himself with them. According to him, "man's ultimate aim is the realisation of God and... the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all."⁴⁶ Thus God is Truth and Love and is worshipped through service to all.

Gandhi's conception of religion is called 'Ethical Religion', because the essence of religion according to him is morality, for it is a relation to God and

to man. He defined God as Truth and the means to attain this truth is non-violence (universal love). Gandhi tried to spiritualize the whole society though he never lost sight of the material well-being as well. Thus his entire conception of life and religion was an integrated one.

Gandhi's special approach to religion and God helped him to involve himself in the social action. Many think that religion is something personal and private. But our relationship with God, others and the world is not something purely private, nor is it fully personal. It has a societal character. Moreover, most national constitutions, including the Indian constitution and the international law provide for religious freedom individually and corporately thus making it social. Perhaps it is the only fundamental human right, which is both individual and corporate, having personal and social dimensions.⁴⁷ Gandhi believed that spirituality manifests itself through the visible activities of life.⁴⁸ He believed in the unity of Being, be it God or man.

Man's ultimate aim is salvation and all his activities have to be guided by this aim. According to Gandhi the way to find God is in His creation. And "God is found more often in the lowest of His creatures than in the high and mighty."⁴⁹ Hence he had as much passion for the suppressed and oppressed classes as for God. He knew of "no greater sin than to oppress the innocent in the name of God."⁵⁰ For him, God is poverty incarnate- *Daridranarayan*. He says, "To a people famishing and idle, the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages."⁵¹ Gandhi was convinced that a man who aspires after the highest spiritual ideal should not

keep himself alienated from the realities of daily life. Hence Gandhi tried to integrate religion and spirituality with everyday life.

The spirituality of Gandhi is essentially one of action. The social aspect of Gandhi's religion adopts the *karma marga* of attaining the supreme goal of life, which is *moksha*. Gandhi was conscious that he was striving for the *Ramrajya* (Kingdom of God) and he declared that for him the road to salvation leads through incessant toil in the service of his country and humanity at large. When Gandhi was asked what religion he professed? he answered, “to serve is my religion.”⁵² The ethical religion in practice is the religion of service, for he declared “we have neither practiced nor known ethical religion so long as we do not feel sympathy for every human being.”⁵³

Service of man is essential for the realisation of God, because man encounters God in man and becomes one with God to the extent that he is in union with his fellow-men through love and selfless service. Selfless service is the Gandhian path to *moksha*. Gandhi says:

“Man's ultimate aim is the realisation of God, and all his activities political, social and religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to find God is to see him in His creation, and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all.”⁵⁴

For the realisation of God, one has to offer one's service especially to the poor and the helpless, for God manifests Himself to us in the form of the helpless and the stricken. According to Gandhi to accomplish unity with God one needs

to deliberate on sharing in the suffering of others and then the eradication of such suffering. One becomes accomplished by working for the welfare of his fellow-beings. "The law of evolution of man is not the law of struggle for one's own existence, but the law of living and, if need be, of dying for one's fellow men."⁵⁵ Gandhi believed that man's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by the struggle for mutual service and the one who truly adores God will find happiness in the happiness of others. Thus the welfare of the individual is intimately tied up with the welfare of all (sarvodaya) and also the liberation of the individual is linked up with the liberation of all.

Today the term religion and politics conjures up before us dramatic and disturbing images from different parts of the world. In the early stages of human society, the influence of religion was all-embracing. The struggle between religion and politics is age-old. Both are about power and both can make absolutist claims. There is a belief that religion has nothing to do with politics. It is true that religion should not be used for sectarian political ends or to capture political power. Nevertheless, religion has much to do with ethics and morals in public life including politics.⁵⁶ Gandhi's aim was to spiritualize every activity of human life. His religion was not something ethereal and cut off from life. For Gandhi says:

“My devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.”⁵⁷

Religion, which takes no account of practical affairs and does not help to solve them, is no religion. That is why he believed that to be religious is to be in the service of mankind. Because of this deep conviction, he completely dedicated his life for the service of the people. Gandhi says: "If any action of mine claimed to be spiritual is proved to be impractical, it must be pronounced to be a failure. I do believe that the most spiritual act is the most practical in the true sense of the term."⁵⁸ In short, religion is not otherworldly nor does God live in the other world. For him religion was the law of life and God is the living power. It is sometimes alleged that 'religious politics' of today owes its genesis to Gandhi, because in his autobiography he said that he could not think of politics apart from religion. Gandhi did not conceive religion as one of the many activities of mankind. For him, "even, the tiniest activity is governed by what I consider to be religion."⁵⁹ To him, "Swaraj is synonymous with Ram Raj, the establishment of the kingdom of Righteous on earth."⁶⁰ It is true that Gandhi cannot conceive politics as divorced from religion. When a questioner asked Gandhi: "In your autobiography you have said that you cannot think of politics apart from religion. Do you still hold that view?" Gandhi's reply was forthright and unequivocal: "Yes, I still hold the view that I cannot conceive politics as divorced from religion. Indeed religion should pervade everyone of our actions."⁶¹

But here 'religion' does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in an ordered moral government of the universe. This religion transcends particular religions. It does not supersede them, rather harmonises them and gives them

reality. Politics should not be regarded as undesirable as it encompasses all our life. Hence Gandhi took part in politics all through his life, "because politics encircles us today, like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries."⁶² He tried to spiritualize politics. Politics without principles has become a curse for the modern world. Gandhian concept of religion has no scope for communalism. Therefore, Gandhi warned against mixing up sectarianism with politics or state. Gandhi says: "If I were a dictator, religion and state would be separate. I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The state has nothing to do with it."⁶³

Gandhian integration of secular and spiritual can be summarised in the concept of sarvodaya. This term was coined by Gandhi to denote 'the well being of all', which includes every type of living beings. The ancients from vedic time onwards wished prosperity and well being of all. The welfare of all is the ultimate objective of sarvodaya and it was John Ruskin's book *Unto this Last* that acted as an immediate influence on Gandhi in developing his distinctive vision of sarvodaya philosophy. It summarily rejects the utilitarian principle of the greatest good of the greatest number and the political doctrine of the rule of the majority as self destructive and unsustainable towards the goal of human welfare. In Gandhian social philosophy, sarvodaya heralds the rise and all round development of all through satya and ahimsa. Hence the ideal of sarvodaya aims at the greatest good of all and strives to ensure the welfare of each individual without any exception down to the last.

Gandhi presents the sarvodaya ideal as an alternative to the systems of capitalist economy and Marxian socialism. Unlike Marx, Gandhi does not subscribe to violence as a means of achieving economic equality. The sarvodaya ideal is built on the principle of ahimsa. He did not want to build a social structure that would “rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and the dumb.”⁶⁴ Hence, he defined his socialism as “even unto the least.” Thus sarvodaya is synonymous with *antyyodaya*, which stands for the welfare of even the last and least of the society. Therefore, a votary of sarvodaya begins his work by toiling for the welfare and the emancipation of the lowest of the low and the poorest of the poor. Hence, *antyyodaya* is the very soul of sarvodaya. This welfare becomes holistic by integrating the secular and spiritual aspects. The most distinctive feature of sarvodaya doctrine is its emphasis on the primacy and the ultimateness of the moral and spiritual values. The moral order is the basis of social order. Man can be trained through self-sacrifice to care for the common good. Every effort of social transformation should begin from the level of the person. Hence, individual transformation is the first step in a new world order. Unlike capitalism and communist socialism, sarvodaya does not merely concern itself with the goal of material progress. Neither does it subscribe to the violent method of achieving social equality “by cutting off the prince's head.”⁶⁵ According to Gandhi this blessed state of social order cannot be attained through violent and untruthful means. Hence he appeals to truthful, non-violent and pure hearted socialist society in the world. Thus through the social, political and economic transformation of the society, Gandhi strives to

establish a non-violent pattern of sarvodaya society, which is a happy blending of secular and spiritual.

The entire Gandhian philosophy of life, his political, social activities and his spiritual endeavours can be epitomized as a ceaseless striving to realise the ideal of *Ramarajya* or the Kingdom of God on earth. He believes that the ideal state of *Ramarajya* once did exist and he wants to restore it again through his life and activities. It necessarily excludes the concept of *Hind Raj* and does not depend on the person of Rama for its veracity. Gandhi says; “By *Ramarajya* I do not mean Hindu Raj. I mean by *Ramarajya*, Divine Raj, The Kingdom of God.”⁶⁶ Irrespective of its historicity, Gandhi considers that “the ancient ideal of *Ramarajya* is undoubtedly one of true democracy, in which the meanest citizen could be sure of swift justice without an elaborate and costly procedure.”⁶⁷

Gandhi defines *Ramarajya* as the "sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority.”⁶⁸ He also said that, “My conception of *Ramarajya* excludes the replacement of the British army by a national army of occupation. A country that is governed by even its national army can never be morally free and, therefore, its so-called weakest member can never rise to his fullest moral height.”⁶⁹ Further, Gandhi asserts that “*Ramarajya* in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat.”⁷⁰ In contrast to this, the ideal of *Ramarajya* is that there would be no discrimination between people of different castes, religions, sex etc.

His vision of religion and spirituality is directly related to everyday life. Gandhi believed that we should not speak about spirituality as if it had nothing to do with the ordinary affairs of life. "Spirituality that has no bearing on and produces no effect on everyday life is 'an airy nothing'."⁷¹ One of the great contributions of Gandhi lies in removing the common wrong assumption that there is a dichotomy between religious and secular, spiritual and physical. Gandhi was in fact throughout his life concerned with very secular goals like the securing of civil rights for Indian settlers in South Africa and the gaining of independence for India. Thus, his devotion to truth drew him to the field of politics and propelled his national struggle for India's freedom. However, this political movement in turn was not merely aimed at political independence of the country, but also at the creation of the perfect non-violent social order in tune with the highest ideals of the Kingdom of God or *Ramarajya*. Gandhi integrated religion with the problems of daily life and thus added prestige to religion. He made a beautiful synthesis of his faith in God and his concern for human needs.

Often people talk of religious unity at one's own terms and conditions. The conflicts between the religions take place because of an absolutist frame of mind. If anyone hopes that religious unity will materialize by the triumph of any one of the religions and the destruction of others, it is an impossibility. Holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possession of any one religion in the world. After long Gandhi came to the conclusion that all religions are true; all religions have some errors in them; and all religions are

equal. Though there is agreement in the ethical teachings of religions, they differ in their creed and cult. So it is better to say that all religions have relativity, truth and falsehood and yet there is complementarity of all religions. It is egoism that creates the feelings of superiority of one's faith in comparison with that of the other.

When we try to understand the Gandhian concept of religion, it appears that he had an anthropocentric view of religion. According to Gandhi, our reason finds its source from God within.⁷² This is only partly true because God is not to be limited to the indwelling *atman* but also the limitless *paramatman*, dwelling in all others and omnipresent in nature. Human beings are imperfect; therefore, the particular religions made by the human beings cannot be expected to be perfect. Hence religions are always subject to a process of evolution and reinterpretation. The religion that Gandhi speaks about does not identify with any particular historical religion. This religion is compared to a trunk of a tree and all particular religions as its many branches. Nevertheless, he called himself a hindu for hinduism came closer to his ideal. According to him it is free from dogma and is the most tolerant religion. The combination of religion and politics has always appeared to be detrimental to the growth of secularism. But by religion Gandhi does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in a ordered moral government of the universe. This religion transcends particular religions. It does not supersede them, rather harmonises them and gives them reality. Politics should not be regarded as something not be touched as it encompasses all our life. Hence Gandhi took part in politics all through his

life. He tried to spiritualize politics. But people began to shape politics with singular demands of particular religions and this led to unending problems. For this reason Gandhi stated that religion is a personal matter that should have no place in politics. Gandhi took this position because of the evil effects produced by the combination of any particular religion with politics. There is no person without a society and religion has to be expressed socially. What we need is not just personal or social priority, but an equal stress on both. Religion then is personal and social, inherited and acquired, vertical and horizontal.

Gandhi assimilated important concepts from different sources, not for the purpose of constructing a system but to gain knowledge about the Truth. So there may be an inconsistency in his thought pattern from time to time. This is perhaps a strength as well as the weakness of Gandhi. He felt that by knowing the essence of a particular religion one could by extension discover the essence of other religions. According to Gandhi, all religions are fundamentally the same and we should respect the other faith as we do our own. All particular religions lead us to one goal. He repeatedly said that this alone will help one to stand in support for communal harmony. The essence of religion and spirituality is to help the person to establish a proper and peaceful relationship with God, oneself and the entire cosmos which is possible only through a moral life. The moral teachings of different religions will help us to have trans-religious spirituality. And this will, in turn, help one to gain self-realisation, to reach the ultimate goal. In the present context of rising fundamentalism and communal conflicts, the views of Gandhi on religion are worth a consideration.

We neither agree with everything that Gandhi wrote on religion nor consider his to be the final word. But his views cast a ray of hope to overcome the current religious conflicts in the world.

Chapter VII

Gandhi's Vision of the Routes to Economic Empowerment

An economic system that becomes a hindrance in the moral well-being of an individual or a nation as a whole is immoral and therefore, sinful. Gandhi regarded economics as a moral science and laid great emphasis on its ethical aspect. No one's gain should be anybody's loss-financial, physical, moral or spiritual. This is the foundation upon which the structure of his entire economic philosophy stands.

Gandhi had an innate sympathy for the poor and deprived. This, coupled with the repercussions of the exploitation of the poor peasants and the oppressed working class both in India and South Africa led him to design an economic model that would bring about an emancipation in the condition of the poor and the downtrodden section of the society. Gandhi believed that the high capitalist endeavors were at the root of all the suffering. Gandhi held that there is enough in this world to feed and clothe all people. However, there is poverty and deprivation because one group prospers on the labour and work put in by others. Gandhi strongly believed in the ethics of hard work and that one is entitled to take from the system only as much as he is capable of producing. According to Gandhi, this was the only way to fight poverty and to alleviate the economic weaker section of India.

Gandhi was not an economist in the conventional sense of the term. Unlike other economists he had not studied economics academically. He did not present his economic ideas in any systematic form or at any one place; his economic thoughts have to be picked from innumerable passages occurring in his articles, interviews and speeches. Unlike conventional economics Gandhi's approach was spiritual and moral and with the basic element of his approach being an overall well-being and not just material prosperity. His economic paradigm was entirely based on his love and will to emancipate even the poorest of the poor of the nation.

Swadeshi is fundamentally an attitude concerning all aspects of life though it is often misconstrued to be relevant only to the economic aspect. In another context, swadeshi can be interpreted in the sense of neighbourliness as it is the philosophy of love through service of the immediate neighbour. It is also perceived as a mutually elevating relationship within the family. The meaning of swadeshi as self-realisation, self-respect, and self-reliance was not simply glorification of established and native methods of production but an ingenious application of the available resources significant to the society or the nation under consideration.

Gandhi's vision of the routes of economic empowerment is not pure material benefits but advancement of humanity on its road to progress by strengthening the character and the development of the personality of each individual engaged in such activity.

In what follows a study of Gandhi's notion of swadeshi has been conducted in some detail.

Swadeshi

“I work for India's freedom because my SWADESHI teaches me that, being born in it having inherited her culture, I am fittest to serve her and she has a prior claim to my service. But my patriotism is not exclusive; it is calculated not only not to hurt any other nation, but to benefit all in the true sense of the word. India's freedom as conceived by me can never be a menace to the world.”

(*Young India*, 3.4.1924, CWMG, Vol.27, P.149)

Swadeshi is the adjectival form of the sanskrit word *swadesh*, which literally means ‘of one's own country’ but this word is better understood in the context of self-sufficiency. In most countries it is practiced in the name of nationalism. This nationalism was present in one form or the other among the natives of the countries, which were under the control of colonial powers. Swadeshi in its entire dimensions would not be confined to the individual level rather it may be regarded as an activity in which all people are involved. Swadeshi is fundamentally an attitude concerning all aspect of life though it is often misunderstood to be relevant only to the economic aspect. In another context, swadeshi can be interpreted in the sense of neighbourliness as it is the philosophy of love through service of immediate neighbour. It is also perceived as relationships within the family. Its essence is to render services to the immediate neighbours rather to locations and people far away. Swadeshi

produces for the neighbour and in turn benefits from the resources available in the neighbourhood. Any action or service yielded in the country is said to be called swadeshi, if in its fabrication the idea of nationhood is directly involved. Swadeshi can also be interpreted as the self spirit of an individual or as a state or the nation which limits to utilize the services of the immediate neighbour in exclusion of a far-off one. The impression is that the network or the distance should be minimal. The meaning of swadeshi as self-realisation, self-respect, and self-reliance, was not simply glorification of established and native methods of production but an ingenious application of the available resources significant to the society or the nation under consideration.

The idea of swadeshi was included into the Indian freedom struggle well before the advent of Gandhi. In the mid nineteenth century there are found to be some evidences of promoting swadeshi to avoid the exploitation of peasants and also as a reaction to the ruination of artisans of India. However, the idea of swadeshi started spreading to the masses of India, during the protests against the Bengal partition in 1905, and proved to be the most powerful method of protesting against the division of Bengal. The expanse of swadeshi includes political resistance, promoting cottage industries and rural industries, boycott of foreign goods, encouraging national education through indigenous means and giving up government jobs. The people of anti-partition movement decided to use only indigenous goods. They even picketed the foreign goods shops. Swadeshi was spread and preached by Noraoji, Gokhle, Tilak, Ranade, Tagore and others by developing the philosophy and programme unique to itself. They

all were worried about the deteriorating condition of the country and they tried to find a way out by evolving the idea of swadeshi which sought to build up autonomous reserves of self-help, fellow-feeling, solidarity, and sense of national identity. Dada Bhai Naoroji was the first Indian who encouraged his fellow countrymen to make use of this strategy against the exploitation and the drain theory of wealth used by the Britishers. Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak too encouraged the swadeshi movement and at the time of Partition of Bengal he took part in the boycotting of foreign goods, and once the foreign goods were boycotted, the gap would be filled by the goods produced indigenously. He took the swadeshi movement to Maharashtra and during the festival of Ganesh Utsav and celebrations of the anniversary of Shivaji mobilized the masses of the country. For Gokhale, swadeshi meant an exalted, deep and all-embracing love for India. In his view the true salvation for India rested in swadeshi. Ranade also advocated the swadeshi by popularizing the preference of Indian goods, even though it would be costlier or inferior to foreign goods. Tagore, the contemporary of Gandhi was also the promoter of swadeshi. He had visualised a swadeshi samaj i.e. an Indian society in the rural setting. He had argued that such a *samaj* can be established only if one can take care and be aware of a sense of social welfare which their ancestors possessed. Before Gandhi, swadeshi was confined only to the boycott of goods but the positivity and entire range of the concept was far from the reach of common people.

Gandhi endorsed swadeshi as a powerful tool against colonialism. He not only brought it into practice, but through him the meaning, content, and

goals of swadeshi have been broadened, deepened and considerably extended in its applications to benefit the masses of the country. He was of the view that only through swadeshi, India could achieve true or *poorna swaraj*. According to Gandhi, self-rule and self-reliance therefore remained interchangeable. Gandhi in the following speech expresses the confidence to achieve swaraj in a very short span of time if the fellow countrymen adopted swadeshi. According to him:

“... Swadeshi movement ought to be carried on vigorously. Every country that has carried on the Swaraj movement has fully appreciated the Swadeshi spirit.....I do hope that the Swadeshi spirit will possess every one of us, and that we would carry out the Swadeshi vow in spite of great difficulties and inconvenience. Then Swaraj will be easy of attainment.”¹

The relation of swadeshi and swaraj as means to an end is reflected in the writings of Gandhi as:

“I have a settled conviction that, if we exhibit the strength of character, the faculty for organising and the power of exemplary self-control, all of which are necessary for full Swadeshi, we shall attain Swaraj without anything more.”²

There is a close connection between swaraj (self-rule) and swadeshi (self-reliance). Although the concepts of swaraj and swadeshi were not Gandhian formulations, as they had figured in political campaigns even before the rise of Gandhi, he concentrated on the practical aspects of these two

concepts such that they could benefit the common man in particular steeped in poverty and misery for a prolonged period of time. Gandhi applied swadeshi as an instrument to bring about change and considered swaraj as the soul of swadeshi. Gandhi treated swaraj as the goal with swadeshi as a means to achieve it. Gandhi initiated this mode of operation in the Indian context with an idea not only to benefit India but to extend it to other nations. He writes:

“I work for India’s freedom because my Swadeshi teaches me that, being in it and having inherited her culture, I am fittest to serve her and she has a prior claim to my service. But my patriotism is not exclusive, it is calculated not only not to hurt any other nation, but to benefit all in the true sense of the word. India’s freedom as conceived by me can never be menace to the world.”³

By relating swaraj with swadeshi, Gandhi succeeded in merging the nation’s urge for freedom and belonging. It is obvious that like truth and non-violence, swaraj and swadeshi too are like two faces of the same coin. The one would be inconceivable without the other. While the former was depicted in his social and political writings, the latter was put into practice through the fourteen constructive programmes, the most significant of which was certainly those of khadi and *charkha*. Gandhi defined swadeshi as:

“Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restrict us uses service of our immediate surrounding to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of definition, I must restrict myself to ancestral religion. That is the use of my

immediate surroundings. If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects. In domain of politics, I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In that of economics, I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting.”⁴

Gandhian philosophy of swadeshi is complete in all its aspects; metaphysical, ethical, political, social, cultural, economic, religious etc. that's why Gandhi called it as:

“Swadeshi is the law of laws, enjoined by the present age. Spiritual laws, like Nature's laws, need no enacting; they are self-acting. But, through ignorance or other causes, man often neglects or disobeys them....The Law of Swadeshi is ingrained in the basic nature of man, but it has today sunk into oblivion. Hence, the necessity for the vow of Swadeshi.”⁵

It was embedded in the basic nature of the human being. It cannot be enacted or implemented as other laws, rather it is a universal law but he emphasised mainly on the economic, religious, social, political and educational aspect of the concept.

On the implication of swadeshi in the economic domain, Gandhi was of the view that the poverty prevailing among the masses of the country was due to the fact that the relevance of swadeshi had been neglected. Gandhi convinced fellow countrymen that one who follows the spirit of swadeshi should use only things that are produced in our immediate surrounding and

serve those industries by making them efficient, and support them in sections where they are found lacking. During Indian struggle for freedom Gandhi comprehended that the economic deliverance of India consists in persuading and revitalizing indigenous industries. This was evident in the writings of Gandhi as:

“Much of the deep poverty of the masses is due to the ruinous departure from Swadeshi in the economic and industrial life. If not an article of commerce had been brought from outside India, she would be today a land flowing with milk and honey. But that was not to be.”⁶

Basic principles of his economics were simplicity, non-violence and sanctity of human labour. The main concern of his economics was to organise fellow countrymen's lives according to the law of human species. Swadeshi, trusteeship, decentralised mode of production is what Gandhi wanted to achieve for all members of the society.

The application of swadeshi in the political aspect is through swaraj and it being a principle of universal application ought to be emulated by countrymen in their struggle for freedom. As early as 1909, Gandhi realised the need of swadeshi in attaining swaraj in his booklet *Hind Swaraj*. He wanted that the center of power should not be held by few people but there ought to be decentralization of political system in the form of *Panchayati Raj* by which the villages in every corner of India ought to be governed. He briefly describes it as follows:

“The government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons annually elected by the

adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. Since there will be no system of punishment in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government. He and his village are able to defy the might of a world.”⁷

Gandhi also introduced the concept of oceanic circle for the village swaraj where every individual of the society ought to be at the same stratum, in place of the pyramid structure of the society, prevalent in most part of the world, which encourages the hierarchical or stratified society. He succinctly explained model of Oceanic circle as:

“In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.”⁸

According to Gandhi, swadeshi would revive India's strength and redevelop its rural cultural diversity and allow them with adequate authority to rule and administer their own matters.

Applying the doctrine of the swadeshi to the social structure in the country, Gandhi initially accepted the institution of *varna* prevalent in the ancient Indian society. He was comfortable with the four-fold division of the society purely based on duties performed by different sections of people. Gandhi considered all professions on the same stratum. He made an earnest attempt to overcome the evils and discrepancies of the Indian caste system by discarding certain intolerable practices which in his view were merely an appendage and did not fundamentally belong to the original system. He was strictly against the prevailing caste system based on birth and social strata. Due to this fact, Gandhi initiated one of the most relentless battles against the curse of untouchability which unfortunately was part and parcel of the caste system. Gandhi looked at the scourge of untouchability as a blot on hinduism. He fought for the cause of untouchables against the upper caste hindu orthodoxy. In the process a great amount of animosity was created among orthodox upper castes that several attempts were made to eliminate him. Not bothering about the risks involved, he stuck to his stand till the end of his life. He totally identified with the untouchables and their upliftment became his primary concern. Similarly he was deeply concerned about the problems and plight of the vulnerable sections of the society viz., dalits, women, tribals, lepers and so on. He believed that true swaraj can be attained only by uplifting the deprived sections of the society. Gandhi included the upliftment of the discriminated in his fourteen constructive programmes. It was primarily drawn taking into account the social realities of our country. Gandhi's constructive programme

aimed at reconstruction of society through voluntary and participatory social action and Gandhi looked upon it as a truthful and non-violent way of winning swaraj.

To follow the spirit of Gandhi's swadeshi in its religious aspect one was required to restrict oneself to the ancestral religion. It is the duty of a person to serve one's own religion and not embrace another religion. If required its defects can be purged to keep it pure but there is no need to renounce it because of possible imperfections. On the contrary one should try to enrich one's own religion by accepting the best from other religions. However Gandhi was not against true conversion and he differentiated it from conversion on account of external influence or force. Speaking about the spirit of swadeshi in hinduism Gandhi said:

“...Hinduism has become a conservative religion and, therefore, a mighty force because of the Swadeshi spirit underlying it. It is the most tolerant because it is non-proselytizing and it is as capable of expansion today as it has been found to be in the past. It has succeeded not in driving out, as I think it has been erroneously held, but in absorbing Buddhism. By reason of the Swadeshi spirit, a Hindu refuses to change his religion, not necessarily because he considers it to be the best, but because he knows that he can complement it by introducing reforms. And what I have said about Hinduism is, I suppose, true of the other great faiths of the world, only it is held that it is specially so in the case of Hinduism.”⁹

According to Gandhi a religious orientation in the sense of self-purification, self-realisation is the crying need of the hour. His attitude was not of patronizing toleration but developing the spirit of fellowship. His veneration for other faiths was the same as that of his own faith. He believed in the fundamental equality of all religions, what he called *sarvadharmā samābhava*. Gandhi's swadeshi approach to religion has great significance in the context of growing communal divide and religious fundamentalism in India and other parts of the globe. This approach is essential to promote harmony among the followers of various faiths and preserving the composite culture of a country like India.

Gandhi applied his swadeshi ideal in the field of education too in a very effective manner. According to Gandhi, education was not solely meant for earning for one's livelihood but it's also plays an important part in the overall development of the personality of an individual. He was against the British system of education prevailing in India which he outrightly rejected in *Hind Swaraj*. He was primarily against the British system of education because of the fact that he thought it was basically meant to enslave the minds of the people of India. He believed that education has to be embedded in the culture and traditions of the country. Foreign language as a medium of education put undue stress upon the minds of the children and they become foreigners in their own land. He elaborated it in one of his speech as:

“We, the educated classes, have received our education through a foreign tongue. We have, therefore, not reacted upon the masses. We want to

represent the masses, but we fail. They recognize us not much more than they recognize the English officers. Their hearts are an open book to neither. Their aspirations are not ours. Hence, there is a break. And you witness not in reality failure to organise but want of correspondence between the representative and the represented. If, during the last fifty years, we had been educated through the vernaculars, our elders and our servants and our neighbours would have partaken of our knowledge.”¹⁰

Gandhi introduced before the country an alternative system of education called *Nai Talim* or basic education. His brief description of education was as follows:

“By education I mean, an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. I would therefore begin the child’s education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training.”¹¹

For this sort of indigenous model of education, he paved the way for the existence of alternative institutions such as Kashi Vidhyapeeth, Gujarat Vidhyapeeth, so that swadeshi should also prevail in education also.

Gandhi desired a change in the basic mechanism of ownership, production and distribution. He wanted freedom from the rule of merchandise and rationality in production. The distribution system should take into

consideration human relationships and the welfare of fellow-being. He believed that there was a need of some kind of occupation that would give employment and empower millions of Indians. Gandhi felt that this could only be achieved by the use of the spinning wheel. At this juncture khadi and village industries made their appearance. Gandhi realised khadi as the necessary and most important outcome of the principle of swadeshi in its practical application. Khadi or the spinning wheel became synonymous to swadeshi. The spinning wheel was at one time the symbol of India's poverty and backwardness. Gandhi turned it into a symbol of self-reliance and non-violence. Khadi enabled him to carry his message of swadeshi and swaraj to the people and to relate to them. Gandhi stated:

“Khaddar is the concrete and central fact of swadeshi. Swadeshi without khaddar is like the body without life, fit only to receive a decent burial or cremation. The only swadeshi cloth is khaddar. If one is to interpret swadeshi in the language of and in terms of the millions of this country, khaddar is a substantial thing in swadeshi like the air we breathe.”¹²

His message thus was one of simplicity, service of mankind, living such as not to hurt the others, attempt of creating an insoluble bond between the rich and poor, capital and labour, prince and peasant. Moreover khadi also became the binding force between the hindus, muslims, untouchables and other casts and classes of the society. Gandhi mentioned in *Young India* that,

“....Hindu-Muslim unity means more or less a solution of the untouchability question too, and khaddar can unite us as nothing else can.”¹³

The philosophy behind khadi was that it is a symbol and the moving force behind the revival of the rural industries, the lifeline of village economy which lies at the very heart of the people of India. Gandhi knows that from time immemorial, Indians have been engaged in non-violent agrarian practices along with some subsidiary industries to support their meager income. To increase their earnings, Gandhi found textile as the industry which would be acclaimed throughout the country. It was evident that the export of cloth from the England gave a boost to the economy of England but at the cost of the exploitation of Indian textile cottage industries. In these circumstances, Gandhi promoted khadi as a weapon not only to cater to economic stability but to mobilize the countrymen to gain political consciousness in a non-violent manner and to attain swaraj. Khadi was not just a piece of cloth but became symbolic of a revolution. Later on Gandhi promoted cottage and small scale industries in the programme. According to Gandhi, swadeshi could also be practiced through opposing heavy industries, both indigenous and foreign. Industrialism was seen by Gandhi as an instrument of exploitation in the hands of the rich and powerful. Gandhi's indictment against heavy industries was also on account of the unfavorable effects to the local environment. The chief concern of the industrialist was materialistic gain and prosperity at the cost of the poor masses who worked under duress and earned very little. Gandhi's vision was to bring prosperity to all his countrymen. He said:

"I want the mill industry to prosper - only I do not want it to prosper at the expense of the country. On the contrary if the interests of the country demand that the industry should go, I should let it go without the slightest compunction."¹⁴

It is for this reason that Gandhi had suggested khadi and village industries as an alternative.

During the Indian freedom struggle, Gandhi worked hard for reviving cottage and small scale industries so that common people and their communities participate directly in the production and use of their produce. The gap between producers and consumers was kept to be as minimum as possible for them to profit directly instead of loosing out to the middle-men. To keep alive the spirit of swadeshi, Gandhi launched the programme of boycott of foreign goods. He anticipated that the swadeshi and the boycott movement would not prosper without an increase in indigenous production which would be independent of the mills and hence he encouraged cottage industries with all his might. Burning of British clothes was a historic act of the freedom movement. Towards the end of the nineteenth century even before the term swaraj, in its new sense, acquired common currency in the nationalist movement the Bengali militants sought to justify their doctrine of boycott of British goods in the name of swadeshi that was akin to patriotism. Gandhi said in one of his writings that:

“Even today I tell you with all the confidence that I can command that if only you all completely boycott

all foreign and Indian mill-made cloth, you will achieve swaraj within less than a year.”¹⁵

Gandhi's fight for swadeshi was not only against foreign goods but also against the mass production by the capitalist industrialists. In his vision, swadeshi meant production by masses and not mass production. According to him, swadeshi was the only way to protect Indian masses from poverty, hunger and unemployment which boycott of foreign goods alone could not fulfill. As Gandhi said:

“Boycott of foreign cloth cannot be immediately accomplished unless every national worker religiously avoids the use of mill-made cloth.”¹⁶

The British Empire was exploiting Indians for several years by charging a tax on salt. The colonial authorities counted on the revenue derived from their salt monopoly and the tax on salt, paid by even the poorest households. Gandhi broke the salt law in 1930. He dared to harvest his bit of salt, a simple act of defiance swiftly emulated by innumerable Indians throughout the coastline. It was a form of spreading the swadeshi spirit amongst the masses of the country. He explained that:

“All of you have to reform yourselves and offer a fight to the Government. We can prepare ourselves to win complete freedom by serving our Antyaja brethren. I should be happy if my doubt about your village is ill-founded. May you serve one and all without exception. Abolition of the salt tax or remission of some other taxes will not mean swaraj for us. Winning swaraj is not going to be as easy as that.

That is only a way to it and by following it we shall reach the goal of freedom.”¹⁷

Truth and non-violence were fundamental to the philosophy of Gandhi. Gandhi's life was exemplar to his firm resolution to tread on the path of ahimsa to achieve the ultimate goal of life. Gandhi warned that:

“They do not know that they are willingly or unwillingly killing the goose that lays the golden egg. They have a right to do so in any case, more so if they do not believe in khadi as the non-violent instrument of swaraj.”¹⁸

Swadeshi is closely linked to the concept of non-violence for the true spirit of swadeshi was not to propagate a feeling of hatred towards anyone who is not a member of one's own society, nor did it advocate rivalry against anybody within the circle. It reflects only love, compassion and non-violence amongst the competitors working with peace and harmony.

He was of the opinion that the feeling of swadeshi should not acquire dimensions of an obsession. Gandhi said that:

“Even Swadeshi like any other good thing can be ridden to death if it is made a fetish. That is a danger that must be guarded against. To reject foreign manufactures, merely because they are foreign and to go on wasting national time and money in the promotion in one's country of manufactures for which it is not suited, would be criminal folly and a negation of the Swadeshi spirit. A true votary of Swadeshi will not harbour ill-will towards a foreigner and not be actuated by antagonism towards anybody on the earth.

Swadeshi is not a cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of selfless service that has its roots in the purest Ahimsa, i. e., love.”¹⁹

On the question whether the mill workers in England would suffer the loss by loosing their jobs when their products would find no entry in India due to the practice of swadeshi, Gandhi went on to clarify:

“Swadeshi in its purest form is the acme of universal service...one suppose that the practice of swadeshi through khadi would harm the foreign mill-owners. A thief who is weaned from his vice or is made to return the property that he has stolen is not harmed thereby, on the contrary he is the gainer consciously in the one case, un-consciously in the other.”²⁰

Swadeshi does not mean boycott of all the stuff from foreign land. It only propagates the use of the local resources for the protection of the indigenous industries. This reflects in his saying as:

“Swadeshi does not banish all foreign or European goods, nor all machine-made goods, nor for that matter does Swadeshi tolerate all home-made goods. Swadeshi admits of and welcomes the introduction of all foreign goods that cannot or need not be manufactured in India and that would benefit her people. Thus Swadeshi admits all foreign books containing pure literature, all foreign watches, foreign needles, foreign sewing machines, foreign pins. But Swadeshi excludes all intoxicating drinks and drugs, even though they may be manufactured in India.”²¹

Swadeshi was not in opposition to a rational and need based support trade among the nations. Gandhi as early as in 1920's set the tone for the globalization when he said that:

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.”²²

Further, Gandhi's swadeshi spirit lays emphasis on the production and consumption of unutilized and underutilized resources available in the country. He did not want that a nation should be dependent on foreign countries for her basic needs. But at the same time, he did not discard everything, foreign. In 1926, he wrote in *Young India*:

“I have never considered the exclusion of everything foreign under every conceivable circumstance a part of swadeshi. The broad definition of swadeshi is the use of all home made things to the exclusion of foreign things, in so far as such use is necessary for the protection of home industry, more specially those industries without which India will become pauperized. In my opinion, therefore, swadeshi which excludes the use of everything foreign, because it is foreign, no matter how beneficent it may be, and irrespective of the fact that it impoverishes nobody, is a narrow interpretation of Swadeshi.”²³

Thus, he was willing to welcome international trade and exchange of commodities if this meant an exchange of equal advantages and did not involve injustice.

According to Gandhi *swadeshi* is a way of life with a commitment and dedication propounded and practiced for the benefit of the people of India in general and to the rural masses in particular. *Swadeshi* demands us to utilise and serve our immediate surroundings. Hence, it is everybody's responsibility to encourage neighbours who can fulfill each others needs. The concept of *swadeshi*, according to him, is a necessity for national existence and stands to be true even today. This approach given by Gandhi to make our rural economy vibrant and lively did not last. Unfortunately, Gandhi's vision of economic development based on *gram swarajya* and *swavalamban* has not been realised till date.

Swadeshi is not exclusive in its meaning and scope and approach. The believers in Gandhian *swadeshi* definitely disapprove *xenomania* i.e. the outlook which regards only foreign or overseas goods to be of high quality, and, therefore the urge to necessarily acquire it nor do they tie up with any sect of nationalism that rejects anything foreign. They are cautious, wary, discriminating about foreign things, but they do not suffer from *xenophobia*.

The spirit of *swadeshi* according to Gandhi should reflect in our thought and its practice. According to Gandhi *swadeshi* gives centrality to neighbourliness and there can be no neighbourliness in a society where relationships are frozen. *Swadeshi* calls for freedom from all forms of

exploitation. Gandhi hoped the spirit of swadeshi would stay alive even after the country attained freedom from the British. He hoped it would be practiced in independent India so that the weaker sections would benefit from it and escape exploitation by the mill owners and industrialists running heavy industries. In his words:

“Swadeshi applies to every man, woman and child in India. It is of a permanent nature. Swadeshi is not to be suspended on the attainment of Swaraj, which is impossible without Swadeshi.”²⁴

POSTSCRIPT

“I claim that human mind or human society is not divided into watertight compartments called social, political and religious. All act and react upon one another.”

(*Young India*, 2.3.1922, CWMG, Vol. 26, P.252)

An overview of Gandhian philosophy imparts the realisation that it is none other than the religious, spiritual, social, and political ideas adopted and developed by Gandhi, first during his struggle for justice in South Africa from 1893 to 1914, and later, of course in India. These ideas have been further developed by later Gandhians, most notably, in India by Vinoba Bhave, Baba Ampte and Jayaprakash Narayan and outside of India by Martin Luther King Jr., an American civil right activist and Nelson Mandela, freedom fighter of South Africa who followed in the footsteps of Gandhi. Understanding and regarding the universe to be an organic whole, his philosophy consists in the inclusion of several manifestations of human existence - the spiritual or religious, moral, political, economic, social, individual and collective. However it is the spiritual element that pervades and determines his entire thought. Through detailed study of Gandhi's seminal ideas I have been led to draw the conclusion that what spreads out uniformly over all his ideas and principles that he lived and disseminated all his life, is the force of the soul that holds the capacity not only to shape one's own existence but to mold and sometimes modify the surrounding environment.

I have tried to discuss in my thesis the various aspects of Gandhian thought, and in doing so, I have tried to remain faithful to his principles. Looking at his ideas through a critical lens has only reinforced my faith. Almost all thinkers and students of Gandhian thought have perceived the element of unity that holds together the structure of his thoughts, which resist the constraints of systematic categorization under separate headings. Gandhi's pragmatic approach led him to assess a given situation and act accordingly, taking on problems as they presented themselves to him. Critics have held this approach to be inconsistent in nature and often contradictory to itself. Hiren Mukherjee, a critic of Gandhian thought, in his book, *Gandhi: A Study* can be cited to have raised some serious objections to Gandhian thought. He observed that whenever Gandhi's ideals were projected on to a living social backdrop they seemed to be impracticable and of little relevance. Speaking in the same tone Dr. Bhagwan Das too had said that Gandhi could only show the path to truth but never the truth itself. I have tried to show that truth, in its nascent stage is relative in nature as compared to the ultimate truth which is synonymous to the guiding force. In Gandhi's thought the emphasis is not on mere idealism, but on practical idealism. It is rooted in the highest religious idealism, but is thoroughly practical in nature. Gandhi's originality lay in the complete fusion of theory and practice concerning all his principles which led him to consider himself as a 'practical idealist'.

Gandhi believed in the unity of human life which is a seamless whole, and cannot be set apart in isolated terrains representing different aspects of

individual existence. All seemingly separate segments are but the different manifestations of an individual's life constantly acting and reacting upon each other being inextricably connected. Due to their mutually supportive character no justice to any single aspect in isolation from other aspects can be made possible. The philosophy of Gandhi was so intermingled with each other that it is nearly impossible to demarcate any of his doctrines in an isolated and neatly defined ambit. Considering his seminal idea of non-violence, it is far from Gandhi's intention to regard non-violence as a mere political expediency but is treated primarily as a spiritual or ethical instrument by him. Non-violence has further implications in its more concrete forms such as economic independence, as much of violence unleashes in an atmosphere of scarcity. Likewise Swadeshi was for Gandhi an integral and essential component of his philosophy which was mainly concentrated around economic self-dependence and well being but it works in consonance with a morality which projects its end as the well being of all. Satyagraha too is a comprehensive social and political application of satya and ahimsa to all aspects of existence, in turn reflecting the ethical logic of its metaphysical conceptions. Satyagraha happens to be an ethical imperative, for one cannot justifiably claim to adhere to ahimsa without making appropriate efforts to apply satyagraha to social and political conflicts. In this sense, satyagraha connotes 'truth-force', the luminous power of truth to be directed towards the promotion of social welfare. Satyagraha is a policy for action and a stimulus for social emancipation of the countrymen. Satyagraha, as a method of social change, attempts for a betterment of the

welfare of all and to initiate a radical change for the people and governments. Repeatedly we notice an interlocking of Gandhi's ideas standing up to each other in mutual support.

The integration of the various principles of Gandhi into a basic unity was manifest into a multiplicity of applications in inexhaustible dimensions. We observe that the thrust provided to all of Gandhian projects was uniformly spiritual in nature.

Gandhian thoughts were never rigid and inflexible but a set of beliefs and principles which are applied according to the historical and social demands unique to the situation. With continued experiments with truth Gandhi's thoughts were constantly in a process of evolving into higher and more applicable forms as a result of which many an inconsistency can be observed in the content of his writings and speeches that were given over a period of time. The readers of Gandhi's works published by Navajivan Trust will notice that some works are prefaced with the following quotation from an April 1933 edition of *Harijan*, he states straightforwardly:

“I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things.... What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment, and therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he still has any faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject.”¹

However the element of unity in Gandhi's thought and a commitment to the basic principles supporting the entire edifice of his philosophy never undergoes a variation.

The dynamic unity between morality, spirituality, politics and religion in Gandhi accumulates from the spiritual certainty of his vision. Almost all of Gandhi's thinking is based on a fundamental moral sense of the world. That central vision or pivotal and binding theme of the philosophy of Gandhi is none other than soul-force, which was a blend of religious, moral, and spiritual fervor. It is not sought to be a theoretical enterprise but is the motivational force, a conscious approach that exhaults the soul over the body in one's everyday existence. The idea was to live amidst worldly possessions without any attachment to them and in turn acting as their trustee, cleansing oneself of greed, fear, anger, hatred, lust, selfishness, prejudice, etc., effecting a discipline of the senses of perception, a vision of universality and control of mind in such a way that a soul-force is born.

Even as a child Gandhi was spiritual and religious in his outlook. He was open-minded and accommodative of ideas from different sources. He learned to fight through the power of his inner conscience trusting the inner voice. However, when Gandhi speaks about the power of the self, he means the *atman*, which he felt was indistinct from God. Thus faith in God was used by him interchangeably with faith in the *atman*. The first instance involving the intervention of soul-force took place during the incident in the train at Maritzburg Railway Station in South Africa. This act of injustice by the whites

was faced with courage triggered by the soul force of Gandhi. He did not surrender to their will instead fearlessly fought against them along with the subjugated masses. His motivation was spiritual in nature where the strength is not physical but is drawn from the soul. Soul-force is that dynamic force that ignites the will of man and helps in realising the potentiality, self-confidence, self-determination and above all its motivation to fight against injustice. It further eliminates ignorance and false perceptions providing enthusiasm even to the weak. In Gandhi's opinion, without the creation of the soul-force, an individual cannot be rejuvenated in the true sense of the term. However, the journey to the realisation of the goal has to be one of dedication to the common good and free of all greed, anger or jealousy.

A study of the political philosophy of Gandhi demonstrates that the notion of satyagraha, non-violence and swaraj were derived from the ideal of soul-force itself. Satyagraha meant holding on to truth which could be made possible only through the force of the soul. Satyagraha can be regarded as one of the greatest contributions of Gandhi as an instrument of justice and peace. He used it to deal with problems on diverse fronts; social, moral, religious and political. We might call it a technique which Gandhi successfully applied and with which he tried to bring salvation to mankind. Thus the term 'soul-force' or 'truth-force' conveys the idea of employing our spiritual energies that Gandhi considered to be greater than any cognitive force or power of the mind. For Gandhi this spiritual reality is the goal, and the means to the goal must be as

pure and loving as possible. True achievement lies in the means to be as pure as the goal.

Gandhi distinguished satyagraha from passive resistance which does not exclude the use of force or violence. He believed that satyagraha is not a method of the weak, like passive resistance, but is meant for the strong who exclude the use of violence in any form. Satyagraha is the law of love for all, with an intention never to destroy or hurt the adversary but to convert them through sympathy, patience, and suffering oneself. Satyagraha insists on the truth and spiritual strength to be extended to one's family, fellow citizens, adversaries and just about the whole world.

Non-violence therefore is a way of acting without hurting anyone or inflicting pain on any other spiritual being. We may hate an injustice for the harm that it brings to people, but we must always love all the people even if they are offenders, out of respect for human dignity. Satyagraha attempts at resolutely standing by truth and justice and taking the path of ahimsa as it is accomplished without hurting the perpetrators. Punishment, for Gandhi was not an option as human beings lack perfection and are subject to error. Thus non-violence is an essential safeguard in the quest for truth and justice. Apart from being peaceful, non-violence is understood by Gandhi to be an expression of active love - the polar opposite of violence in every sense of the term. The ultimate station Gandhi assigns to non-violence stems from two basic points. First, if one considers all life to be one, then all violence committed towards another is directed towards oneself too, towards the collective, whole self, and

thus self-destructive and counter to the universal law of life, which is love. Second, Gandhi believed that ahimsa is the most powerful force in existence. Had violence been superior to non-violence, humankind would have succeeded in destroying itself ages back.

Gandhi relates non-violence to truth and to the spiritual force. While violence is an expression of brute force, soul-force proceeds on the path of non-violence even in the act of self-defence. All through Gandhi's techniques are consistently seen to be based on soul-force that he considered to be the law of life and its growth. Non-violence means love even for the evil-doer, seeking to conquer evil by truth and to resist physical force by soul-force, i.e., to convert the evildoer by undertaking self-suffering. More importantly non-violence imparts self-purification and spiritual power that embraces all humankind with love.

Sarvodaya, the greatest good of all, again is an expression of conscious soul-force that is directed toward the individual and societal life of all people and finds expression in the emancipation of all. For the discernment of truth and development of soul-force, Gandhi recommends a course of discipline. This discipline consists in self-control acquired by the pursuit of non-violent values.

Self-restraint is the first element of brahmacharya that means the control of all the senses under all circumstances, which can only be achieved by an inner strength and not through physical force. Brahmacharya is an integral part of soul-force, and it is also related with the other vows at the same time. And

though soul-force acquires more centrality in relation to the other vows, they have their own importance as they are symbiotically related to each other.

In Gandhi's view swaraj can never be achieved in the true sense through the use of the brute force. In a speech addressed to the students in Calcutta, he set out the potential of soul-force over brute force in fighting for swaraj. He said:

“We cannot give battle to this Government by means of steel but we can give battle by exercising what I have so often called soul-force and soul-force is not the prerogative of one man or a sannyasi or even of a so-called saint. Soul-force is the prerogative of every human being, female or male”²

Gandhi regarded swadeshi, which is one of the eleven vows of Ashram life, as central. The word swadeshi has a wide connotation according to Gandhi for it includes not only the idea of wearing home-made clothes but takes into consideration social and economic issues that needed to be resolved in order to bring about self-sufficiency. The idea was to create indigenous institutions which would be self-sustaining and provide the dignity of labour and economic independence. Swadeshi indeed proved to be of immense over all importance, for not only did it impart self-dependence but courage and faith in oneself. Swadeshi brought about a coherent relationship between economics, politics, religion and the philosophy of the land. Gandhi's concept of swadeshi was an instrument to control one's state of existence that added life to the challenge taken up by the Indians under Gandhi's guidance. Gandhi says:

“ If crores of people will refuse to wear or use foreign cloth and be satisfied with the simple cloth that we can produce in our homes, it will be proof of our organising ability, energy, cooperation and self-sacrifice that will enable us to secure all we need.”³

The simplicity and beauty of Gandhi’s philosophy in support of the idea of the *charkha* and khadi lies in the fact that the potentiality of the simple spinning wheel was so tremendous that it could completely and successfully unite the whole country. Gandhi was of the conviction that it was a simple but the most powerful device to give people moral and economic strength and a feeling of self-reliance which is an act of soul-force. The spinning wheel is symbolic of the inner strength which Gandhi inculcated in his countrymen so that they could stand firm against the mighty British empire. He says, “The spinning wheel represents to me the hope of the masses.”⁴

Most of the time Gandhi and his followers were involved in constructive programmes, and he considered these as most important, for the intention behind that was to give strength to the poorest of poor. For Gandhi it included Hindu-Muslim friendship or communal unity, removing untouchability or racial discrimination, abstaining from alcohol and drugs, practicing spinning, weaving, and other village industries, sanitation, schooling and adult education, upliftment of women, education in hygiene and health, cultivating one’s language, working for economic equality, forming labor unions, helping the poor, rural people and lepers, and improving the education and lives of students.

In recounting Gandhi's central ideas and their practical utility the underlying thematic unity is clearly visible. Most of the studies on Gandhian philosophy found 'truth' as central, but in my conclusion, I would determine soul-force to be the propelling thrust for the entire philosophy of Gandhi. He did not separate between the mundane and transcendental, worldly and other worldly and all his doctrines and principles are inter-woven, taking from and providing strength to each other as opposed to being tied down to their definitions that separate them from other aspects. The spark that ignites and lightens up Gandhi's entire scheme of thoughts, the glue that cohesively binds together all his ideas and experiments was the one central force- the soul-force. In Gandhi's mind the greatest good of all towards which humankind is consciously or unconsciously striving for can only be achieved when soul-force is at the root of all individual and social engagements. For the discernment of truth and development of soul-force Gandhi recommends a course of discipline. This discipline consists in self-control acquired by the pursuit of non-violent values. He must be non-violent, because violence is offensive to the greatest satya, the unity and sacredness of all life. Violence is an expression of brute force and non-violence would mean none other than the largest love, love even for the evil-doer which seeks to conquer evil by truth, to resist physical force by soul-force, i.e., to convert the evil-doer by undertaking personal suffering. Gandhi distinguishes between the non-violence of the brave based on an inner conviction and non-violence of the weak adopted as a measure of expediency. For Gandhi it is former alone that mattered, and to

cultivate that the satyagrahi must shed fear and be humble. For this he must achieve brahmacharya, i.e., control, in thought, word and deed. To be fearless the satyagraha must also possess the right economic attitude which should be determined by the ideals of non-stealing, non-possession and bread labour. Gandhi believes that the satyagrahi grows spiritually as much as he simplifies his life and shares with the lot of the poorest and lowliest. He should cease to crave for money and other material means as they function as hindrances in matters of spirit. A certain degree of comfort is no doubt essential for the satyagrahi but this should not go beyond the required limits. Swadeshi, which stands for an all comprehensive creative patriotism, lays down the only correct way of advancing the greatest good of all. According to this principle the satyagrahi should restrict himself to the use and service of his immediate surroundings in preference to the more remote.

Gandhi's philosophy springs from his spiritual inclinations which then grow into an integration of the social, the political, the material and the religious; aspects that are integral to human existence with the strength of a love, truth and spirituality collectively known as soul-force. Gandhi experimented with truth and practiced almost all his thoughts in his lifetime thus presenting a comprehensive view of life. In the course of my study of not only Gandhi's thought but also his life, I have delved deep into his seminal ideas and principles and found that no theme functions in isolation, but it is through the unified strength of them all that Gandhi could achieve what he did. It has always been intriguing as to how can one single man, and a man as frail

as him, take on an entire empire and defeat it without ever turning an eye against an eye. Meticulously I have gone through the works of Gandhi and associated literature and isolated that conquering force to be Gandhi's soul-force; the binding and underlying force that dictated all his principles and actions.

The philosophy of soul-force is the philosophy of the integral man. For Gandhi the only reality is the spirit that is common to all human beings. The only way to its realisation is through the service of the other. Through harmonising the legitimate physical demands of a human being to the higher self a force is born; a force none other than soul-force. Soul-force is thus an expression of a harmonious life co-ordinate under the unilateral direction of truth, where there is no room for evil and only the good that prevails. This force is the plenitude of living for the individual and the masses. The vision that Gandhi had, could only be realised through courageous non-violent action. Gandhi had proved to the world that each individual is potentially a powerhouse of devotion, perfection and courage but for its realisation one has to discern deep into our own being and search for the inner voice that guides our conscience in the right direction. With love, truthfulness and non-violence Gandhi had erased fear and violence from the hearts and lives of his people leaving behind a message that has resounded the world over each day. No matter how much the world order may have shifted, perhaps the only way to avoid the impending doom would be to follow the legacy of Gandhi.

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